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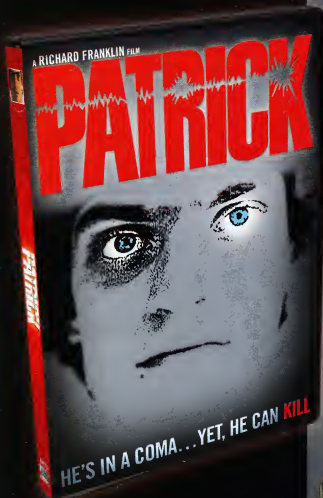
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BLACK DREAMS:

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Mario Bava created the style and substance of the Italian giallo, he drew up the blueprint for the American splatter flick and he gave Tim Burton and John Carpenter lessons in style. For those reasons and more, you should read this article by Chris Alexander

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Note From Underground

Every once in a while, someone who thinks they know better suggests to me that it might be a good idea to put a celebrity on the cover of the magazine. My response is always pretty much the same: "Why on earth would I want to do that?"

"Simple, because you'll sell more magazines," is the inevitable reply.

Not only is that a sweeping generalization, but it's probably more false than it is true. The official reason why *Rue Morgue* does not put celebrities on the cover of the magazine is because we are not in the business of selling personalities. We are in the business of selling a concept, and that concept is horror. Ergo, the closest you'll get to finding Linda Blair on our cover is through a picture of Regan MacNeil, in all her demon-possessed glory.

Vincent Price (who graced the cover of our last issue), is probably the closest we've come to an exception, but Vincent is an exception; it's no stretch of the imagination to say that he embodied the concept of horror (and all you nitpickers out there should know that our cover shot was actually taken from his 1959 film *The Bat* and not from a publicity still).

Anyway, having this question brought up to me time and again got me thinking on the issue, and at some point it dawned on me that there is a second, more subtle reason why *Rue Morgue* does not make space for celebrities on the cover. The reason is: I don't care about celebrities. In fact, it's probably closer to the truth that I do not even believe in the concept of a celebrity in the first place.

I have often said to people that I do not have heroes in this genre, and by that I don't mean that I do not respect directors or actors or even musicians who have made contributions to horror. It just means that I don't get too excited, that's all. And it especially means that I will not gloss over someone's second rate work because I'm in awe of their legacy. I don't get in awe of people's legacies.

Several years ago, I was considering running a cover story on George Romero because, frankly, he is as close to a god as the genre will ever see. But George Romero has not been making great movies lately. Truth be told, he's been making some pretty lousy ones. And I can tell you with no amount of insincerity that until Romero makes a movie that blows us away, his only chance at getting his name on our cover will be through a retrospective on the works he's done before, the ones that blew us away. (And even then, it would be one of his venerable zutbies who would get the cover, and not George himself.)

The same goes for John Carpenter, Wes Craven and Clive Barker. Anne Rice, Peter Straub or Dean Koontz. Or whoever.

It may sound a little harsh, but this policy fits neatly into our one editorial mandate at *Rue Morgue*, which is to make value judgements about everything we come across. This is what prevents movies like *Halloween*, *Urban Legends 2* or even *Brainier* from making it onto our covers, 'cause, frankly, we don't think they're good enough.

If you look back on the history of the magazine, you'll notice that our covers have been a mix of contemporary and historical subjects, the late great Vincent Price (old), H.G. Lewis' *Blood Feast 2* (new), *The Evil Dead* (old), *Battle Royale* (new) and so on. The fact is, we're always looking for a contemporary story and frankly, we would prefer it if all of our cover stories were about upcoming things rather than things that have already happened.

But admit it we're going to put *Ghost Ship* or even that *Ring* remake on the cover over Mario Bava, who I am sure only a fraction of you have even heard of. Why? Because we'd be sending you the wrong message if we did.

The reason I wrote this editorial is not because I wanted to give you some tough talk about how editorially lofty we are and how we're so above all the wankery that seems to pollute modern entertainment magazines in this day and age. We aren't above anything, and believe it when I tell you that what I have outlined above compromises us with our advertisers in practically every issue we put out.

The reason we do what we do is because we believe that it is our right to achieve some semblance of journalistic integrity and please note that I did not say "journalistic right opinion." Our opinion is pretty much like everybody else's, the only difference is, we'll actually give it to you. And if you respect us, you'll keep buying and reading *Rue Morgue*. But if you'd rather be star struck, then maybe you should be watching *Entertainment Tonight*.

RG

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

ONLY ONE MASTER

Even though Vincent Price has been a household name in horror for years I have recently been noticing that Price is sort of falling out of the spotlight with the younger generations of horror fans. I have been in the haunted attraction industry for fourteen years now as a freelance actor and FX artist and you would be amazed how many of the younger generation I've worked with have never even heard of people like Karloff, Lugosi and Price. I think this is a horrible injustice to the masters of horror! I think your coverage of the interview, photographs you have chosen and the top 10 Price horrors was an excellent idea.

Mr. Maniacal - Ohio

LONG LIVE THE HOUSE

RE: The *Hilarious House of Frightenstein*. My favorite segments of that show were the ones where scientist Professor Julius Summer Miller would lecture on physics. With his puffed out hair he really looked like a mad scientist. I can still watch Vincent Price's spooky face opening the show more times than I can count.

David Booth - Agincourt, Ontario

THE DROME IS HOME

First of all, I would like to thank you for putting out the very best horror mag - it surpasses the rest by far. I also wanted to thank you for covering bands such as Blizk, Green Goblin Project, and Death Becomes You. I had the opportunity to see these guys along with many other amazing independent bands at the Chou's Nite Out 2 concert. All the bands there put on a ghoulish show. And after meeting some of the people you can tell they really appreciate the support from everybody. So to Rue Morgue, keep putting out the rollicking good work. At his dearest...

James Gruesome - Fayetteville, North Carolina

In every issue I always look at your CD reviews. In issue #17 you recommended Mark Lalbarte *Pillow Scenes Soundworks* and I tracked down a copy of the CD. It is really fascinating, eerie and unique. Thank you very much for recommending it. I never would have known about it.

Alexis - Portland, Oregon

DISCO UNDEAD

Greetings. I just read your review of *Averaging Disco Vampires* which I wrote, co-produced, and starred in. Overall your comments on the movie were fair and some even flattering. We the producers knew of many of the problems you mentioned. But I think a good fact to be pointed out is that we shot this mofa for under \$7000. That in itself was quite an achievement. Plus this was our first feature-length project. It was a learning experience and it's helped us as filmmakers. Support your independent filmmakers, horror or otherwise. They need it!

Jerrett Tate - Burlington, Kentucky

IT'S EVIL!

I just got the new *Rue Morgue* in the mail yesterday, and I'm just floored by the whole thing. From the quality paper stock and colours to the quality of writing, spotless editing and current coverage, this is now easily the best horror magazine in print. I don't know what they put in the water in Canada, but whatever it is, keep drinking it. You're covering the horror scene like this white, suburban American boy could only dream of. I even like the ads! I discover more stuff I would have never heard of in this magazine than anywhere else. You introduced me to *Midnight Syndicate*, and I don't even live far from them!

Rod Whitesack - Louisville, Kentucky

HORRORS OF JAPAN

My English is so-so (I'll try to do my best) In this month's issue you talked about *Kairo* from Kurosawa. You are talking about these superb movies but for us not to be able to have them is pure torture (I'm pretty sure that some of you like torturing...). In Quebec, we are Region 1 and to see those movies, we have to buy a special DVD player (which is not cheap). The cost is incredible for these movies (example: I bought *Men Behind the Sun* for \$70). Can you point me to a place where I can get movies such as *Kairo* and *Ring Birthday* (Ring 0) that will do in my DVD player and won't be freakin' crazy for the price? Thank you for your time.

Daniel Champagne "The man who hates stupid American movies." - Montreal, Quebec

The short answer is no. The long answer is that some DVD players allow you to watch movies on VCD. VCD versions of Japanese films are available at ebay.com, pokerindustries.com, hikix.com, dvdholddvd.com or absmusic.com. Barring that, you may want to check your local independent, alternative video stores or Asian video stores. You'll be surprised what you can find there.

A BORN MORTICIAN

I need to let you know the impact your magazine has left on me. I grew up reading *Famous Monsters*, I read *Creeper*, *Eerie* and *Vampiro*, E.A. Poe, De Sade, Lautremont, etc. Music I was into: Black Sabbath, Lord Sutch, Scrammin' Jay, Nash the Slash, Residents. So what I can do now is add your mag to my list of favourites! You guys cover everything sacred to me. Thanks, never stop! Jacob Martinez - Los Angeles, California
PS: Your focus on "indie" horror - priceless!

RETRACTION

Last issue *Rue Morgue* mistakenly credited *The Giallo Collection* to Blue Underground ("Murder So Sweet" - *RM* #29) when, in fact, the releases belonged to Anchor Bay Entertainment. *Rue Morgue* also mistakenly identified Jay Douglas as being a part of the Blue Underground label. *Rue Morgue* regrets the errors.



LETTER POLICY

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to info@rue-morgue.com or:

Post Mortem
c/o Rue Morgue Magazine
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Dreadlines.

News Highlights



Horror Happenings

The Good, the Bad and the Pretentious at the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival



Bruce Campbell plays an aging Elvis in Don Coscarelli's crowd-pleasing *Bubba Ho-Tep*

The international film community invaded *Rue Morgue's* backyard once again for the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival this past September. With more films than ever before crammed into a brief ten days, the real story belonged to the films you couldn't get in to see, like *Auto-Focus* and a batch of outstanding non-horror films, like *Bowling For Columbine* and *Lost in La Mancha*. While not as heavily stacked with high-caliber genre films as last year (which saw *Hearts In Atlantis*, *From Hell* and *The Devil's Backbone*), this year's horror crop ultimately emerged as a pretty satisfying yield nonetheless, with more variety than in previous years.

BUBBA HO-TEP USA

Rue Morgue faves Don (Phantasm) Coscarelli, Bruce (Evil Dead) Campbell and Joe (The Bottoms) Lansdale unite to create what has to be the funniest, exciting and touching genre film in memory: Campbell plays a geriatric Elvis Presley who teams up with Ossie Davis as President John F. Kennedy to battle a soul-sucking supernatural menace plaguing their East Texas rest home. What's to say? If there's any justice in this world, *Bubba Ho-Tep* is destined to become a classic. Mixing genuine laughs with genuine scares, and Campbell's world-weary, regretful Elvis leaving an indelible

impression, *Bubba* is one of those films you go to festivals hoping to see.

Considering its, ahem, esoteric subject matter, Coscarelli admits that bringing *Bubba* to the big screen wasn't easy. And if that wasn't enough, doing justice to the material was a priority.

"The greatest challenge was walking this fine line between the tone of the movie – are you going to veer off into camp? Are you going to make it a real scary horror movie?," the director told *Rue Morgue*. "What I'm really proud of is that it truly defies genre; it's not really a horror movie, a comedy, a drama – but it is all of those things I think it works well on all levels. It may not be the hardcore horror that those fans want, but we were able to have these broad laughs yet still have some heart as far as Elvis' predicament; his regrets and his ultimate redemption."

Bruce happily agrees, "The good news is that Joe [Lansdale] really likes the movie, and writers usually hate their adaptations; they're always like 'Aw, you fucked me over! You're never getting one of my stories again!'" It happens all the time because Hollywood gets their meat hooks into the material and changes it so it becomes nothing like what it's based on! This is Joe's story! It's a live action *Bubba Ho-Tep* – nothing much has changed. Hopefully now we can milk Joe for other stories."

Judging from the excellent response *Bubba Ho-Tep* received at its packed mid-



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night show, it should only be a matter of time before it screens before audiences worldwide. As of this writing, Coscarelli is still seeking a distributor, but take it from us, Elvis will live! Look for more and an exclusive interview with Coscarelli and Campbell in an upcoming issue of *Rue Morgue*.

CABIN FEVER USA

Self-confessed horror fanatic (and David Lynch protégé) Eli Roth promised to make a "balls to the wall hardcore horror movie" and delivers in bloody spades. The subsequent subject of an intense bidding war (with Lions Gate Entertainment winning the battle), *Cabin Fever* recalls the heyday of '70s horror, with shades of *Evil Dead*, *Chain Saw*, *House by the Cemetery* and *Motel Hell*. This lurid tale of a flesh-eating parasite and the toll it takes on a formerly close-knit group of friends is frequently hilarious, and more frequently disgusting (thanks to effects powerhouse KNB). A definite find.

EVELYN: THE CUTEST EVIL DEAD GIRL CANADA

This eight-minute short got some well-deserved attention at this year's Festival, and rightfully so. The branch of writer/director Brad Peyton, *Evelyn* is a morbidly cute look at a typical day in the afterlife of Evelyn, a spritely undead girl who just wants a friend. The vision here is very Tim Burton and draws heavily from *Pleasant* and *Edward Scissorhands*—so heavily, in fact, that it risks becoming an homage. Still, it's an impressive short and it's carried through with a lot of style and wit.

GIN GWAI (THE EYE) HONG KONG/THAILAND/UK

This is a creepy and effective thriller in which a young woman named Mann, blind since birth, has her sight restored... only to be plagued by terrifying visions. Mysterious black-clad figures seem to foreshadow sudden deaths, horribly disfigured denizens haunt her everyday existence, and the reflection that stares at her from mirrors is not her own. Desperate to uncover the truth, Mann journeys to a remote village, where the secret behind these visions is revealed. A horror film with a human core, *The Eye* will



A scene from the animated masterpiece *Spirited Away* and (inset) the morbidly cute *Evelyn*.

do for elevators what *Texas* did for chainsaws (you'll know it when you see it).

LE MARAIS (THE MARSH) CANADA

...Or, why we dread going to film festivals. There's always one movie that unfolds like molasses on a January morn, and *Le Marais* was it. The tragedy is that the story, dealing with the influence of myths and folklore on an unnamed European town and how they lead to murder, had all the right elements in place, not to mention some absolutely stunning cinematography and production design. Unfortunately, *The Marsh* too closely resembles its title; dank, smelly and rotten. Funded by Telefilm Canada, we now cue the sound of grinding teeth from struggling indie filmmakers in need of serious coin.

SEN TO CHIHIO NO KAMIKAKUSHI (SPIRITED AWAY) JAPAN

The latest animated epic from legendary Hayao Miyazaki (*Princess Mononoke*) is a dark fairy tale in which young Chihiro and her family take a wrong turn and wind up at what can only be described as a hot springs

resort for supernatural beings. With her parents turned into pigs, Chihiro must find a way to change them back... but soon enough she is in an even greater danger. Picture *Alice in Wonderland* rewritten by Neil Gaiman and Clive Barker. *Spirited Away* is a masterpiece; engrossing, charming, exciting... and a little bit terrifying for all ages.

SPIDER CANADA

In days of yore, David Cronenberg was a force to be reckoned with, but those days are long gone. Much like his recent films *Crush* and *Crash*, *Spider* finds the director once again falling in love with his concept (Ralph Fiennes as a schizophrenic wandering London) at the expense of coherence and movement. Is David ashamed of his past success as horror auteur? Judging by the crushing, arsy bore that is his recent work, we're led to believe he is. Winner of this year's Best Canadian Feature Film prize, *Spider* proves that, either we don't know what we're talking about, or Festival judges aren't above administering the occasional blow job.

Brad Abraham and Vulnavia Wick

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Dreadlines.

ROADKILL

FROM THE
INFO HIGHWAY



<http://members.aol.com/weirdtales>

H.P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury put their first breaks in pulp legend *Weird Tales* (see Classic Cut on pg. 90). Travel here and find the bumpy history of the original *Weird Tales* (published from 1923 to 1954), its most illustrious contributors and artists, and a partial gallery of its famous covers.

<http://gameillustrations.blogspot.com/monsterkid>
Monster Kid Magazine ain't for kids — it's for Monster Kids (i.e. big kids who grow up loving classic monsters like Frankenstein, Wolfman and the Mummy). The last online issue came out in October 2001, which may be an indication that this gem won't be around for long, so catch it while you can.

www.users.bigpond.net.au/ghouliebabies/camps.html
With all these horror dolls coming out, the Aussies were bound to get on the bandwagon. Adopt a Ghoulie Baby or Glamour Vamp and invite your mates over for some midnight play!

www.themodernword.com/scripitorium/lovecraft.html
Scholar S.T. Joshi is considered to be the authority on the life and works of H.P. Lovecraft, which makes this destination, written by Joshi, the place to start for info on the man behind the Mythos.

www.asylumill.co.uk
We're not absolutely sure, but we suspect this site is the calling card for artist Neil Norris. He only asks for one dark moment of your time. Heed his command... or else.

www.darkvisionsinc.com
Click on Robert Aragon's official website to see monstrous artwork, plus an archive of personal correspondences from the late great Vincent Price.

www.angelfire.com/ar/VDisturbingdecor
Are your walls just screaming for a portrait of a blood-splattered vampire? Bypass Ikea and check out Philip Goodwin's *Disturbing Decor* for something truly dark and affordable. Prices range from \$25 to \$100!

—compiled by Mary-Beth Holleyer
Got a website suggestion?
E-mail a link to: mbh@rue-morgue.com.

Stan Winston takes a Wrong Turn to a new franchise

Shooting wrapped in Toronto this past October for an upcoming feature produced by special effects wiz Stan Winston (*The Thing*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Alien*). Titled *Wrong Turn*, the movie will mark Winston's first foray into producing, and he's promising a landmark balls out wall-to-wall horror fest for his debut.

"This is hardcore horror," Winston told *Rue Morgue* during a break from the set. "There's nothing camp about this movie. Although our principal characters are young adults, this isn't a teen-scare camp movie. This movie is grounded in reality, it's about real people who come into contact with real people. Not very nice real people, but real people who terrorize them, kill them and kill their friends."

He went on to say that *Wrong Turn* owes significant debt to *Deliverance*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *The Hills Have Eyes*, and added that he was motivated to make the picture because "we haven't seen, I don't think, a really good hardcore horror movie in quite a few years."

Wrong Turn tells the story of six "unwitting young people" who make a — guess what? — that leads them down the road to perdition, in this case a trap in the wilderness of West Virginia. The group is then stalked and terrorized by three hideously inbred mountain men who have to be seen to be believed.

"I would say that the fear factor is never there because of the special effects that Stan Winston does," says Winston, one of the two effects specialists to have a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. "What I will say is that your terror and your awe is helped by the characters that I create. The things that I'm known for, you may think it's special effects, but when you get to the core of it, the Terminator and Edward Scissorhands and the Queen Alien are all memorable characters. These mountain men, they're bad guys but they're real people. And they're going to be three of the most memorable real people that you can possibly imagine."

Although we were not allowed to reprint the photos, Winston was kind enough to show us what he has in store and, trust us, you haven't seen deformities quite on par with these grossly disfigured mountain men! Winston promised that the film will not hold



Stan Winston takes the producer's chair in *Wrong Turn*

back when it comes to the bloodletting, but says all of it will serve the story.

"I don't consider it gratuitous gore," he says. "It is shocking, it is unsettling, it is very visceral, it's extremely organic, but it's not gore for the sake of gore. It is gore for getting the emotion out of you that this movie requires, which is to really believe, when you sit down, that the filmmakers in this movie are really out to hurt you... and to scare you."

Wrong Turn stars Desmond Harrington (*Ghost Ship*), Eliza Dushku (*Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*), Emmanuelle Chriqui, Jeremy Sisto, Kevin Zegers and Lindy Booth. The film is directed by Rob Schmidt (*Saturn*) from a script by Alan B. McElroy.

"It's one of the scariest scripts I've ever read," says Winston, who also says he was attracted to it because of the potential to turn it into a franchise. "I happen to be a big fan of movies that you go into and need to use all of your guts to sit through it, and that's what *Wrong Turn* is."

As of this writing, no definite release date has been set for the film, but stay tuned for more news in an upcoming issue.

Mary-Beth Holleyer

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He created the style and substance of the Italian giallo, he drew up the blueprint for the American splatter flick and he gave Tim Burton and John Carpenter lessons in style. He is Mario Bava, Italy's late great Maestro of the Macabre, and his enormous contribution to American horror films is only now getting the recognition it so richly deserves..

BLACK DREAMS

THE HAUNTED FILMS OF MARIO BAVA

by Chris Alexander

Photos courtesy of Artsciviv (artsciviv.freesurf.fr)

The first Mario Bava movie I ever saw was also the man's last, in the early '80s, when home video was new and people would rent anything, my pop and I picked up some cheapo-looking exploitation number called *Beyond the Door 2*, put out by the now kaput Media Home Entertainment. We weren't expecting much, and neither of us had seen the first one, but we took a chance anyway. Ninety cold-blooded minutes later, I was ruined; a shaking heaving mass of trauma. The fright film I had just witnessed was not in fact a sequel to that turgid mid-seventies *Exorcist* rip-off *Beyond the Door*, but a crass American retelling of *Shock*, the bone-chilling swan song from the Godfather of Italian terror, the late great Mario Bava.

Drenched in blood and pulsing with directorial innovation, this lurid masterpiece was my introduction to the maestro and launched a lifelong quest for the complete Mario Bava; I had to see all I could see, read all I could read, and thanks to unrepentant Bava freak Tim Lucas' monthly column Video Watchdog in the pages of *Gorezone*, find out who was cutting, hacking, repackaging and re-scoring this visionary's sprawling and highly influential body of work.

And yet, Lucas aside, no one in the North American mainstream was really giving the master his due: fly-by-night vid companies were hurrying idiotic new titles over the elegant originals (hence the classic Cameron Mitchell sword and sandal epic *Knives of the Avenger* inexplicably morphed into *Viking Massacre*, complete with ripped Conan clone on the cover), and fiber morose critics like Leonard Maltin were sticking even Bava's most celebrated and accomplished works like *Blood and Black Lace* and *Lisa and the Devil* with "Bomb" ratings.

It wasn't until the advent of the Internet and DVD that Mario Bava took his rightful place in western consciousness as the true master of Mediterranean Macabre (sorry, Dario), with specialty labels like Image and VCI completely restoring most of his films, including long-lost classics like the S&M-themed *Whip and the Body* and the original Italian language cuts of both *Black Sabbath* (a.k.a. *The Three Faces of Fear*) and *Black Sunday* (a.k.a. *Mask of the Demon*).

Critical discussions and dissections are now everywhere, glutting the Net a dime a dozen, with thousands of theories and alternate takes on the "true" story (how much of *Shock* did Bava's son Lamberto actually direct? How exactly did *Lisa and the Devil* get jimmied into *The House of Exorcism*? Why did Bava receive no credit for his special effects work on Argento's *Inferno*?), so much so that the grand old man has lapsed into legend.

Cue 2002. Eccentric producer Alfredo Leone, the man behind the Bava creepies *Baron Blood*, along with fledgling company Kismet Entertainment, announce plans to remake some of the late filmmaker's classics, much like Robert Zemeckis and Joel Silver did to the work of William Castle with their *Dark Castle* imprint. Yikes! With all this Bava baloney being sliced, the fans need clarity, peace of mind. They need perspective, insight, closure on the genius who pretty much invented the Italo-horror film (indeed, Bava co-directed a good chunk of Riccardo Freda's *I Vampiri*, the first Ital-



Haunted World: Elke Sommer screams bloody murder in *Lisa and the Devil*, and Daria Nicolodi takes a blood bath in *Shock*.

ian horror film of the sound era).

They need, we need (and thankfully got) Troy Howarth's jaw-droppingly complete and heavy (seriously, the thing weighs 10 freskin' pounds!) coffee table tome *The Haunted World of Mario Bava* (FAB Press - fabpress.com); 350 lush, oversized pages featuring not only in-depth insights into each one of Bava's films (including Leone's recently restored, long-lost *Rabid Dogs*, now called *Kidnapped*), but also a revealing glimpse at the gentleman behind the ground-breaking grue. Add to that an astonishing array of breathtaking and ultra-rare colour stills and *The Haunted World* is a book that no serious scholar of cinema should be without.

American-born Howarth seems to have developed his Bava obsessions much the same way I did, except his road to ruin began with the aforementioned Joseph Cotton/Elke Sommer vehicle *Baron Blood*, seen at the tender age of seven on late night telly.

"I remember watching *Baron Blood* and being enthralled by the images," the still-smitten author told *Rue Morgue* recently. "They were absolutely different than anything I'd ever seen. By 1996, I was an aficionado of European horror. I noticed that there were a wealth of books on Falei, Argento and even Franco, but none on Bava, and he was certainly the most important of all."

While it's undeniably true that Howarth's mammoth celebration of all things Bava may very well be the first of its kind, Howarth comes to the same conclusion that those of us in the know have screamed for years; that Bava was an unparalleled genius; his hypnotically perverse, gravity-defying camera

dips, red/blue saturation colour schemes (Bava was a painter, sculptor and cinematographer), and intense preoccupation with beauty in even the ugliest of tableaux, ensured that even his lesser, trashier work stacked up better than most genre filmmaker's best efforts.

Nowhere has this case been better argued than in Howarth's chapter on the surrealist masterpiece *Lisa and the Devil*, featuring Elke Sommer being menaced by future *Kojak* star Telly Savalas as a sinister huter who may or may not be Satan. The film screened to packed houses in Cannes 1973, but money man Leone couldn't seem to ink a distribution deal; the flick was just too odd, too mannered, too intelligent for the early seventies horror market. Howarth goes into explicit, informative detail about the heartbreaking ordeal Bava experienced during this period, an awful episode echoed in the words of lifelong pal Leone.

"Nobody would touch it! Nobody knew what to make of it!" the super-sharp 76-year-old producer told *Rue Morgue* in September. "Here was this gorgeous, opulent film that we were so proud of and nobody wanted it. It was too cerebral, too ahead of its time. During the first screening at the Paris theatre, the audience sat absolutely still and silent. In 1973 this, of course, was death for a horror film."

Not even AIP honcho Sam Arkoff, who had previously handled Bava's *Black Sunday*, *Black Sabbath* and *Planet of the Vampires*, making very big bucks in the process,





Buffet of Blood: A murder scene from the Friday the 13th archetype Bay of Blood and (left) a series of original movie posters and lobby cards from Bava's classic period.

wanted anything to do with the confounding *Lisa*.

The film languished and Leone stood to lose over a million dollars. Things began to change when, later that year, Friedkin's *The Exorcist* was unleashed and did hoffer international box office. An idea was born in Leone's head to do reshoots and re-edit *Lisa* and the *Devil* to cash in with the Satanic blockbuster. A script for this new, vulgar framework was cobbled together and Bava absolutely hated it.

"'Bambinesco!' was Mario's reaction," claims Leone, "which translates into 'a child could do better.' We fixed it up, did some rewrites, got Elke Sommer back — she was a good sport — and began production on what would eventually become *Casa dell'esorcismo*."

Indeed, the man who considered himself a consummate craftsman and not an auteur, eventually agreed that the product needed to turn profit and grudgingly submitted to Leone's request, but, due to a temporary falling out between the two colleagues, Leone admittedly supervised the final edit. The result was 1975's mind-bending, immensely successful, yet endearingly awful *House of Exorcism* (a.k.a. *The Devil in the House of Exorcism*).

Credited to "Mickey Lion", this new version is a truly weird, schizoid experience, featuring Robert Alda's tormented priest, Sommer's demon-possessed Lisa puking up gobs of frogs, plenty of growled cuss words, flushed titbits and, of course, lollipop-popping devil butler Telly Savalas. Chunks of the original film are used as flashback and the whole mess doesn't make a lick of sense but still, as mentioned earlier, there is something here, an energy and level of interest that most directors couldn't dream of conjuring in their finest hours. The irony is that now Image's fully restored *Lisa* and the

Devil is freely available and widely considered to be one of the maestro's crowning achievements, while the trashy reworked *House of Exorcism* is currently haunting the \$2 video store delete bins. Go figure!

Believe it or not, Bava's weird, hallucinatory style of visual storytelling has influenced scores of celebrated international artists and filmmakers who, like Howard and countless others, were happily scarred for life upon entering his twisted, gorgeously warped world. Director Tim Burton was fortunate enough to catch the director's maiden voyage, the classic and terrifying *Black Sunday* at age 11 during a 48-hour AIP horror film festival. Out of the umpteen flicks Burton watched that weekend, it was the only one that left any kind of impression: his 1999 film *Sleepy Hollow* has been falsely accused of being an homage to Hammer, when in fact much of it plays like a colourized version of *Black Sunday* and to a lesser extent, the Wurdulak sequence of *Black Sabbath*; certainly the wide-eyed "terrific beauty" of raven-coiffed Scream Queen Barbara Steele is evident in almost every female character.

And those who loathed John Carpenter's *Ghosts of Mars*, dismissing it as a hokey, fetishized, goth-rock *Alien* clone completely missed the point: it was actually a remake of Bava's ultra-creepy 1965 landmark opus *Planet of the Vampires*, itself cannibalized by Dan O'Bannon and Ridley Scott in the supposedly groundbreaking 1979 chiller. Even tough guy director Martin Scorsese has proudly placed himself among the legions of respectable Bava-philes: many sequences in his 1991 remake of *Cape Fear* play out like early Bava giallo and, visually at least, *The Last Temptation of Christ* bears an uncanny resemblance to Bava's heavily stylized studio bound surrealism.

Hell, even hip hop gurus the Beastie Boys

They called her the Arch Heroine of Horror, and for many, **Barbara Steele** earned that title in her first role as the Russian Witch Princess Asa Vajda in Mario Bava's *Black Sunday*. Here, the publicity-shy Steele takes time to remember the man who launched her career.



The Maiden Behind the MASK

by Chris Alexander and David Del Valle

Sultry, mysterious, beautiful — in many respects Barbara Steele embodied every bit of the sinister allure of Mario Bava's directorial debut, the unforgettable *La maschera del demonio* (later released in the US as *Black Sunday* and in Great Britain as *Revenge of the Vampire*). The movie was a masterpiece of Italian cinema, establishing Steele as a horror movie star overnight, a title that later put her on equal footing with the genre's male-dominated top echelon: Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, Vincent Price and Christopher Lee.

As a result of *Black Sunday*, Steele was asked to go to Hollywood to star in Roger Corman's *The Pit and the Pendulum* before returning to Europe to settle into a career in Italian horror movies, among them 1962's *The Horrible Secret of Dr. Hirschcock*, 1963's

The Spectre, 1964's *Castle of Blood*, 1966's *An Angel For Satan* and the British Curse of the *Crimson Altar* (1968), where audiences first heard her undubbed voice.

The seventies and eighties would find Steele extending her legacy with appearances in David Cronenberg's *Slivers* (a.k.a. *They Came From Within*), Joe Dante's *Piranha* and Denny Harris' *Silent Screams*, where she played alongside Cameron Mitchell and Yvonne De Carlo. In 1991, Steele was brought in for the television remake of *Dark Shadows*, but the series was discontinued in the face of Gulf War coverage.

Although publically uncomfortable with her role as the "arch heroine of horror," Steele is undisputedly the genre's greatest female icon — her large hypnotic eyes, classical features and obvious flair for the

macabre have endeared her to a huge international audience. Ironically, her appearance in *Black Sunday* is generally considered to be her greatest genre role.

Rue Morgue spoke to Barbara Steele in September.

From bit parts in British comedies to the starring role in one of the greatest Italian horror films of all time and ultimately, to a genre icon, do you ever regret doing Black Sunday?

Yes. There have been many times throughout my acting career such as it was that I felt trapped in horror films. If I could do it all over, I would have gone to RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) and become a proper actress along the lines of, say, Helen Mirren, whom I admire enormously. It is

essential to learn one's craft, you know, and I never felt like a proper actress especially making those horror films in Italy. Now I can look at *Black Sunday* as I did earlier this year at The American Cinematheque and truly appreciate its virtues. It is Bava's masterpiece. And I am very proud and grateful to have been a part of it. However, it took twenty years for me to turn that corner.

Bava vs. Fellini, *Black Sunday* vs. *8 1/2* — Two of the most radically different masterpieces of Italian cinema, and you appeared in both. Which on-set experience gave you the biggest thrill?

Without question Fellini. One can't compare the two. Fellini was a magical experience full of dreams and the rapture of Roman extravagance. You must understand that no one including Bava himself thought we were making a masterpiece [with *Black Sunday*]. One doesn't banter about terms like that frivolously. With *8 1/2*, we all knew that something very extraordinary was taking place. Fellini was Rome and the city embraced him completely. Remember, *Black Sunday* was Bava's first film as a director and my first experience working in Italy. I spoke little Italian and was filled with anxiety and fear, not a thrilling experience to say the least. It was very difficult for me doing all of those horror films at that particular period of my life. The difficult thing is that most of the directors demanded an excessive acting style that makes everything look overboard all the time. The only man I ever worked with who could get away with this was Vincent Price.

By now we know you have a lovely speaking voice, and yet for nearly a decade we never heard it. What was the reason behind the relentless dubbing of your voice, even in English speaking roles like *Corman's Pit* and *The Pendulum*?

I couldn't be coaxed off my terrace in Rome to participate in the ones that were done in Italy mainly because they would not pay the actors to dub. They considered that part of the performance and if they ever got you into one of those dubbing studios it would be torture without pay. I remember Christopher Lee telling me to ask for more money or not to do it at all. As far as *Pit* is concerned, the producers didn't like my accent at the time

and felt it wasn't part of the ensemble as a whole.

Bava had a gentleman's reputation. Did he ever really lose his nerve on set?

Never! Mario Bava was from another century and behaved accordingly. I never heard him raise his voice at the actors or display any emotion one would expect from an Italian. It made me question if he really was Italian at all.

What was the greatest thing that Bava taught you about being an actor?

Nothing and I don't mean that in a derogatory way. Bava and I were never close. I did not socialize with him whatsoever.

The only times we were together was on the set and he was far too busy with the look of the film to concern himself with the actors. He was simply not very highly charged or emotional. I respected his vast knowledge and was a bit in awe of him actually.

I understand that you are not a fan of horror films, but why do you think horror directors have been so captivated by you for their roles of terror?

As I have said many times in other interviews regarding this question, I do not know who they are addressing in these films as I am nothing like the characters I have been asked to play in horror films which unfortunately have been rather one-dimensional and very iconic. I suppose my looks create an image that lends itself to the atmosphere of the macabre which is also true of Christopher Lee and Vincent Price. We were typecast because of our looks.

How many coffins do you think you've climbed out of in your career?

I'd much rather talk about how many lovers I had in Italy during those films!

You won an Emmy for your TV producing work, and I do believe your last onscreen appearance was in the revamp of *Dark Shadows*. Are there any behind or in front of the camera plans on the horizon for Barbara Steele?

con for Barbara Steele?

I like to work, you know, but at the moment the projects that I'm involved in are not at the stage where I can readily discuss them. So let's save that question for another time.

Fifteen years after *Black Sunday* you lent your talents to yet another legendary filmmaker's debut: David Cronenberg's *Shivers* (a.k.a. *They Came From Within*). Was that a positive experience?

I admire Cronenberg very much. The experience in Toronto was far from positive, mainly because of a misunderstanding regarding the way David was directing a particular actress the day I was first on set. I overreacted and spent the rest of the film feeling lousy about it. Years later, I attended a screening and reception for *Crash* and I was able to apologize and be graciously accepted. He is brilliant!

Your European film output of the 1960s veered between masterpiece and exploitation. Any films that you were particularly proud of or embarrassed by?

I am very proud of *Young Forever*. I like the conflict of the role and the vulnerability of it. Some of the films since then I would rather forget with the possible exception of *Cogot Heat* which was Jonathan Demme's first film. He has certainly gone on to bigger and better things. If my part had not been cut so severely, I would have included *Pretty Baby* which was beautiful to look at but missed the mark by a mile in telling the truth about Storyville and the man who wrote about it. I gave Louis Malle the story for *Pretty Baby* in the first place. By the time the shoot was over, I was hiding in the background in large hats preferably with veils. The best thing about that experience was being in New Orleans. ☘

Barbara Steele in a scene from the classic *An Angel For Satan* (1966).



pay tribute to the maestro's 1968 Euro-trash action epic *Danger: Diabolik* in their funny as fuck video for Body Movin', as does Roman Coppola in his underrated comedy/satire *CQ*. Watch Mary Harron's *American Psycho* and tell me she didn't screen Bava's trippy serial killer satire *Hatchet for the Honeymoon* more than once, even the recent Bill Malone-lensed chunker *Fear Dot Com* "borrows" the little ball-bouncing girl/ghost from Bava's head-spinning 1966 classic *Kill, Baby... Kill!*

And who could forget Bava's bloodsoaked body count epic *Bay of Blood* (a.k.a. *Twitch of the Death Nerve*)? This tongue-in-cheek, stalk and slash number is well documented as not only the first of its kind, but undoubtedly the film that spawned Sean Cunningham's campfire kill-fest *Friday the 13th* and its myriad sequels; many sequences are virtual carbon copies of *Bay* and both films even look like they were shot on the same location. *Friday the 13th Part Two* even features *Bay*'s now famous "double penetration" sequence in all its flesh-piercing, to the floor gory glory! This eye-opening, completely over-the-top slaughter fest was known in many parts of Europe as "Carnage" – a moniker that it honestly earns, scene after sickening scene.

Bava is everywhere. Every murther that ever made or will make a horror flick owes something to this savagely brilliant gentleman of the Italian cinema, whether directly or indirectly. He was a man ahead of his time, creating art that, with its skewed sense of reality, often bypassed the brain and went directly to the soul. Pure, inexplicable terror, raw emotional image and visual ingenuity.

Hacked and abused by his American distributors, virtually ignored by his own countrymen, Bava's unique "haunted world" is ripe for rediscovery. And thanks to torchbearers like Alfredo Leone, Tim Lucas and now Troy Howarth with his towering and reverent book, Mario Bava's legacy as one of the founding fathers of the modern horror film is firmly cemented. Already, many film professors are using the almost impressionistic *Black Sunday* as part of their curriculum and the now fully-restored, Bava family-approved masterpiece *Kidnapped*, is garnering rave reviews (it screened to standing ovations last May at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood) and will soon be rearing its



Maestro of the Macabre: Mario Bava, pictured shortly before his death in 1980 and (below), a classic scene from the *Drop of Water* sequence from *Black Sabbath*.

nasty head at (hopefully) a theatre near you.

The question is however, how long will this renaissance last?

With Kismet's looming slew of Leone-licensed remakes lurking over the blood spattered horizon, will their quality or lack thereof have any influence on the immortality of these now classic thrillers? According

to Kismet mover and shaker, producer David E. Allen (*Dog Soldiers*, the revamped *Kidnapped*), some "major players" have already expressed interest in the projects, starting with the very film that sent author Howarth on the path to righteousness, *Baron Blood*. That redux is to be immediately followed by the one that started it all: the nightmarish, proto-gorefest noir *Black Sunday*, arguably Bava's best known, most cherished work – its scene of a spiked demon mask literally hammered into the screaming face of witch Barbara Steele single-handedly defined the graphic nature of the 1960s Euro horror boom.

Arguably, the Bava films had their time and place; they were acts of rebellion against an Italian film system whose critical elite frowned upon horror, and an American one that consistently dumbed down genre pics

for the drive-in set (indeed, Bava's only true Hollywood-financed film was the insipid Vincent Price comedy *Dr. Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs*). Seeing them now, we're transported back to a time and place that no longer exists. These pictures were labours of love, loaded with low-budget innovation and simply dripping with both a distinctly European sensibility and a real passion for the medium – the blood and sweat and struggle evident in almost every frame. So the question stands: with so many of today's heavy hitters already openly embracing and adapting the master's style and cinematic aesthetic, why tamper with the originals? It's sort of like giving the Mona Lisa a mohawk.

Leone, who now owns the exclusive rights to thirteen of Bava's films, including *Black Sunday*, the John Saxon programmer *Evil Eye* (a.k.a. *The Girl Who Knew Too Much*) and the Rashomon riff *Four Times That Night*, hopes for the best.

"I really don't know what to expect," he says. "When Kismet approached me about the remakes, I was skeptical but who knows? Time will tell."

Wrapping up my conversation with Leone, the man had this to say about his dear friend and accomplice in terror:

"I learned so much from Mario Bava. He was a master of his craft, virtually peerless and absolutely humble, an ego the size of a pea. I loved him."

See the films. Buy the book. Celebrate the man. Because in this case the tried cliché rings true: they really don't make them like they used to. **B**





At twenty, he was already taking part in some of the greatest horror movies Italy has known. The man who gave us *Macabre*, *Demons* and *Delirium* remembers his greatest mentor: his father.

LAMBERTO BAVA'S

HERITAGE OF HORROR

by Rod Gudino

Lamberto Bava was born into a life that most of us, hell, most filmmakers, only dream of. The son of Mario Bava, Lamberto was already getting some on-set experience by the time he was twenty, assisting his father on 1966's *Terroro nello spazio* (*Planes of the Vampires*). It is commonly known now that the older Bava would often feign illness on productions, allowing his son to gain the experience he needed to become a filmmaker in his own right.

Mario only lived long enough to see his son's directorial debut, *Macabre*, in 1979, but the younger Bava would go on to team up with Italy's rising red wave of horror filmmakers, principally Dario Argento, whom he assisted on *Inferno* and *Tenebre*, and who helped him on his own *La casa con la scala nel buio* (*A Blade in the Dark*). Lamberto's crowning achievement would come in the form of *Demoni* (*Demons*), the 1985 box-office hit that brought splatter and heavy metal music together, and which he followed up with a sequel a year later. He subsequently found a niche in 1992 with the fantasy miniseries *Fantaghiro* which he developed into a series.

Rue Morgue spoke to Lamberto Bava in October.

What is the greatest lesson that your father taught you as a filmmaker?

It's a question that is very easy and very difficult, but I think the answer has to be: always be true to yourself.

What movie did your father consider his most frightening?

Well, he didn't always want to make horrifying movies, he liked to scare people. He was very happy when his films caused people to be on the edge of their seats. But horrifying? I think it would have to be the one that is called *Blood and Black Lace* in English but I don't think there was just one by itself. *I tre volti de la paura* was another one [i.e. *The Three Faces of Fear* a.k.a. *Black Sabbath*].

Your father placed a big importance on the visuals in his movies. What did he feel was the key to frightening the audience?

Well, you know, he thought that it was important to create suspense and he was influenced by Hitchcock's famous way of scaring people. I'm talking about myself now – but I think he felt the same way – the thing that scares people could be this: in some circumstances you first let them see that there's someone locked in a room before someone opens the door, and the audience will be thinking, "oh mama mia, mama mia, don't enter into that room!" In some cases this is the way you can make suspense. In other cases, you make the audience assume that there's something beautiful behind the door, and then you open the door and there's a monster and that's what makes them jump from their seats. Based on the discussions that we had about these sorts of things, I think that my father thought that a film requires one and the other type.

At what age did your father allow you to start watching his movies?

When my father started directing, I was already fourteen- or fifteen-years-old. I remember that I maybe didn't see *La maschera del demone* (i.e. *The Mask of the Demon*, a.k.a. *Black Sunday*) for two or three years. The first film I was interested in was *Black Sabbath* as well as *Blood and Black Lace* because, before I was fourteen, he didn't do any films, I can tell you this: I have a son, he's a big boy now, and he would watch his grandfather's films when he was twelve or thirteen. Certainly I was fifteen or sixteen when I saw them. I think that the horror films – not the really over-the-top ones – thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, is a good age to see them.

Did your father come to realize the influence he had on filmmakers in the West before he passed away?

Not much. He knew that his films were being bought in America and that they were well received. And that was because, even after his first film, American International Pictures continued to buy

more. Then he learned that some directors, even Martin Scorsese, were influenced by his productions. But he didn't know any more than that.

After all these years, have Italian critics changed the way they view your father's films?

Not that much. I can tell you that when Tim Burton came to Rome several years ago to present *Sleepy Hollow* – which paid a lot of homage to my father – he told the Italian journalists that there was lots of Mario Bava in the film and almost everyone asked "Mario who?" [laughs]. The young who are now becoming journalists today, yes, they know who he is. I stayed the other week in Bologna where they were presenting the restored version *La maschera del demone*, which is one of my father's biggest films, and there were critics there who obviously appreciate the films. But during his time, his films were heavily criticized. In general terms, the younger people are the people who like horror and watch it and certainly like the films of Mario Bava. But the normal cinema journalists like him little.

You once referred to your father as a "fantalist." What did you mean by this?

I was talking about his character. I meant he wasn't one who would always have the clearest of ideas. But as far as character goes, he was a person who was very respectful of others and he didn't want to cause anyone any harm.



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THIS YEAR, THE HARBINGERS OF
HORROR PUNK ROCK CELEBRATE THEIR SILVER ANNIVERSARY....

THE MISFITS



BY AARON LAPIER ILLUSTRATION BY GARY POLAN

"Return of the Fly... with Vincent Price... yeah, Return of the Fly..."

It's been a quarter of a century since Glenn (Danzig) Anzalone and Jerry (Doly) Casale first began making noise in a garage somewhere in Lodi, New Jersey. Inspired by the punk rock revolution at its prime and a slew of popular and obscure B-movies, the Misfits became the unlikely harbingers of Ghoul Rock, the first modern rock band to utterly devote themselves to the theme of horror. Their breakthrough did not go unnoticed; the Misfits grew over the years to become emblematic of the genre's legacy on the silver screen in a mountain of Halloween tie-ins, spooky memorabilia and outrageously priced collectible albums.

Even so, the band's 25th anniversary is a bittersweet event. 2002 finds the quartet stitched together by Doly and a handful of punk rock all-stars (among them Marky Ramone of The Ramones and one-time Black Flag vocalist/guitarist Dez Cadena). The story of the real Misfits—Doly, Danzig and a list of revolving drummers, singers and guitarists—is a running soap opera of infighting that has only become more insidious with the bandmember's practice of using the

Internet as a platform for their views. Regardless, 25 years later, a Misfits renaissance is in full swing, and if the fans have noticed the late developments, they certainly haven't cared.

DEVILOCK ROCK

In the beginning, it was just a few DIY punks with a good idea. In the end it was a band that became one of the most recognizable names—and faces—in music. The elements were there from the start: early in the Misfits' career, a white skull-faced reaper in red robes began appearing on flyers and album covers, as early as 1979's 7-inch *Horror Business*. This figure was taken from *The Crimson Ghost*, an obscure twelve-part movie serial that ran in the mid-forties that was titled after its sinister lead villain. The image was an ideal one: the Ghost's looting skull face was instantly recognizable and evocative of the band's ghastly interests; it would be forever linked to the Misfits, from album covers and T-shirts, to tattoos and automobile air fresheners.

However, The Crimson Ghost (or The Fiend, as he would later come to be called), was only the creepy veneer to the band's larger than life onstage persona. In 1979, Only invented a hair-style he called the "devilock," essentially one long lock of hair pulled tight in front of his face, a demonic variation to the rebel rockability style of the Stray Cats in their hey day.

"[It was a] bi-product of the spiked punk hair," Only would later tell *Guitar.com* during an October 28, 1999 online chat. "My hair in '78 was blue and spiky like Sid [Vicious] and during a long hiatus, it grew. I combed it in a 1950s [duo] and as it grew longer and hit my nose, I let it go and died it black."

The Misfits adopted the style in added make-up around the eyes to accentuate their grim associations. Last but not least, were the muscles. At some early stage in their history, the Misfits took on the practice of regularly working out, a practice that only began to pay off by their demise in 1983—Danzig, Only and guitarist Doyle (Paul Casale, Jerry's younger brother) went from being typically emaciated punk rockers to shrewy thugs, each resembling their own hip version of Frankenstein's monster. The lumbering physiques would add significantly to their image; the band became notorious for occasional outbursts of violence, chasing a young Mobley Cruz out of the Whisky A Go-Go and occasionally beating up an unruly audience members.

B-FILM BORN INVASION

At the centre of it all, of course, were the songs. While other punk bands railed hatred towards the establishment, Glenn "Evil Elvis" Danzig's lyrics were far more imbued and frequently revolved around movie monsters and shudder pulp violence. As punk became more

politically aware following the advent of the Dead Kennedys in 1979, the Misfits became all the more counter-cultural, and they pursued their dark muse into a growing obsession with horror.

Like many pioneering ideas, however, the melding of music with the macabre was a gradual process. Originally, the Misfits did not fully embrace the genre. Instead, they were a fiercely unique combination of the trash attitude of Iggy & The Stooges and the simplistic power anthems of The Ramones. Former guitarist Bobby Steele (1979-1980) once said that while he was in the band, the Misfits were not a horror punk band, but a punk band with a few horrific lyrics. The Misfits were on course, however, and by the time Coyle was added to the lineup, their image had become progressively more intertwined with the horror of B-movies and EC comic books.

Soon, songs like *Teenagers From Mars*, *Night Of The Living Dead*, *Return Of The Fly* and *Ghouls Night Out* began cropping up in a combination of brooding-gothic-garage and chunky-distorted-punk-pop songs. Their *Evolve* album took its cover from a 1957 horror film (*Unholy*), and concerts became an important Halloween tradition for the band.

The fans – or Fiends as the Misfits preferred to call them – were also inducted into a club. Established in 1979 by Danzig, the Fiend Club dutifully served the Misfits' still small fan base. Through the Club, the band began to merchandise its name and image with stickers, buttons or special deals on new recordings. Looking back, the Fiend Club was very similar to the days of the pulp horror comics of the 1950s, where kids would send away for the morbid curiosities advertised within. When the Misfits folded in 1983, so did the Club, but it was subsequently resurrected in 1995 after Only's resurrection. Anything associated with the original Fiend Club is today a priceless collector's item.

THEY WALK AMONG YOU

Even though they were living a cult classic, most of the Misfits' activities went unnoticed during their main tenure from 1977 to 1983. This is because, despite their rejection of the "punk politics" of the time, the Misfits fully embraced the DIY of punk culture. "Do-It-Yourself" was as much a staple of the Misfits as were the werewolves, alien invasions, and things that went bump in the night. The Misfits would form their own label – Blank, followed by Plan-9 in 1978 – and put out their own records, using scissors and glue to do so if necessary.



It was five years before a full-length album, *Walk Among Us*, was finally released in 1982. Prior to that, only a handful of collectible 7-inch EPs were available, ensuring that the band never rose above its strictly underground status. But DIY had its drawbacks; the Misfits were not particularly popular during their heyday and, in fact, the number of people who saw the original lineup play live is quite small.

The Misfits played their last show in Detroit on October 29, 1983. Unfortunately, any camaraderie the band had developed in a few short years was non-existent. Danzig began talking about starting a new band (which he would, in fact, go on to form with Misfits roadie and photographer Earle Von, under the handle Samhain), and was instrumental in the sudden departure of drummer Robo,

who had been living in Danzig's basement until he quit, following an argument. After replacement drummer Brian Orange was literally ejected from stage for being too drunk to play, Only and Coyle had seemingly had enough, and symbolically sat on their amps for the remainder of the show. The next day Only, Coyle, Danzig, and Orange drove back to New Jersey. There would be no communication between the two brothers and Danzig for a very long time....

FROM HELL THEY CAME

A period of quiet and inactivity embraced the Misfits after that, during which – ironically – they became a highly sought-after commodity. Chiefly responsible for their belated popularity was a certain heavy metal band named Metallica. Throughout the eighties, Metallica (along with KISS) were seen wearing t-shirts with the leering Fiend on them and, in 1987, the heavy metal foursome released an EP of cover songs, choosing Danzig and Only's obscure punk band

as source material. Two Misfits tracks made it onto that album, the anthem-like *Last Caress* and the thrasher *Green Hell*. The results were almost immediate: underground music fans scrambled to get more of this mysterious band that created catchy punk rock out of themes of rape, murder and death.

Danzig took advantage of the new-found interest by issuing a string of previously unavailable, or impossibly rare, recordings. Although he had actually started the project by releasing *Collection* the previous year, he wisely capitalized on the surge in popularity that followed in the wake of Metallica's EP.

Over the course of the next few years, Only began expressing an interest in resurrecting the Misfits. He was finally given the right to do so after a lengthy legal battle with Danzig, which was finally settled in an out-of-court agreement (see *RAW2*). The Calafas were to have exclusive rights to perform under the name, and joint rights with Danzig when it came to merchandising. After a few brief publicity stints (including one at Chiller Theatre in New Jersey), the Misfits began playing with a new lineup: Only, Coyle, drummer Dr. Chud, and vocalist Michele Graves. All the pent-up publicity managed to get the band to ink a deal with Geffen Records in December of 1996, and the following May, the reinvigorated Misfits emerged with the ultra-slick sounding *American Psycho*.

Although Fiends were divided as to whether the Misfits could really exist without lead singer/songwriter Glenn Danzig, most were unanimous in their opinion that *American Psycho* was a strong album. Unfortunately, good feelings within the band itself would not last long. In the summer of 1998, the Misfits announced that Graves would not be joining them on their tour of South America. Filling in would be Myke Hedges of the New Jersey goth band The Empire Hidesous. Reportedly, Graves had left to pursue a career playing in the NHL, but, currently, there is considerable doubt that





25 Hymns from Hell

The Misfits may have been the first to take up the tradition of naming all their songs after horror films, but the Flends know that's a relatively recent development in the band's history. Back in the early days of evil, song titles and lyrics reflected a more subtle approach; less obvious nods to the genre highlighted by the consistently dark, violent album imagery. Here, *Rue Morgue* presents a condensed version of the Misfits Horror Bible: 25 terror tunes that capture the band's early devotion to all things Halloween...



framed, makeup, and devil locks.

2. American Nightmare

This classic three-chord rockabilly track serves as a soundtrack to the underground slasher of the same name set in Toronto. Danzig does an impressive job imitating Elvis on this one.

3. Astro Zombies

Ted V. Mikels should be proud. His *Astro Zombies* became known as one of the worst horror movies of all time, enticing the Misfits to snatch it up as one of their anthems. Bassist Jerry Only has often revealed this to be his favourite Misfits track.

4. Bloodfeast

One of the creepiest Misfits songs, *Bloodfeast* is the musical answer to H.G. Lewis' groundbreaking gore fest of the same name. The lyrics here are far darker than the camp humour of the film, but the hot, sticky, stench of fresh blood remains.

5. Braineaters

The Misfits used the 1968 low-budget rip-off of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to title one of their shortest songs of all time.

6. Crimson Ghost

The fluster victim from the 1946 twelve-part serial was used as the Misfits' world-famous skull symbol

for most of their career. A track of the same name and subject matter appears on the Misfits' 1996 comeback album *American Psycho*.

7. Die, Die, My Darling

Although this track is one of the Misfits' most popular (Danzig recycled it in his Samhain project, while Metallica covered it as well), this one remains one of the Misfits' least talked-about horror references. The title is taken from Canadian director Silvio Narizzano's 1965 Grand Guignol opus *Fearful*. The lyrics also make reference to the 1969 Vincent Price film, *The Oblong Box*.

8. Earth A.D.

"You bet your life because the hills have eyes." The title track of the Misfits 1983 benchmark trash punk album was Danzig's painting of a post-apocalyptic wasteland, in the vein of the then popular *Mel* Max films. Hence, he snuck in this reference to Wes Craven's classic suburban-family-in-danger film that used a similarly apocalyptic setting.

9. Evil Never Dies

This phrase appears on a popular Misfits t-shirt, and is originally derived from the 1966 B-Horror *She-Creature*. Nowadays, numerous horror films use it as a tagline.

10. Ghoul's Night Out

Although not a direct reference, the title of this gothic-garage rock track bears a striking similarity to Ed Wood's famously bad *Night of the Ghouls*, a follow-up to the disastrous *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. *Plan 9*, in turn, was used as the Misfits' imprint from 1978 on.

11. Green Hell

Here, Danzig describes the deep, dark place from whence came the titular monster of Kenneth Crane's eponymous 1958 shocker, *Monster From Green Hell*. The song may also be a nod to James Whale's 1940 adventure film of the same name.

12. Halloween/Halloween II

One might suspect these tracks to be based on the misdeeds of one Michael Myers, but in reality, *Halloween* is an anthem of pagan violence dressed up in the imagery of the holiday. The sequel is a ritualistic chant of werewolf lore, written and sung in non-standard Latin.



13. Hatebreeders

"You feel the things that make a world turn angry red." Although the song is not about 1959's *Angry Red Planet*, this lyric is another great example of Danzig's

tendency to discreetly weave B-film references into his songs. The creature from the film made the cover of the Misfits' *Wast Among Us* album.

14. Horror Business

"Driving late at night/ Psycho '78/ My bathroom is now for you." This song is commonly believed to be a reference to Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 masterpiece *Psycho*. However, it has also been written that the song is actually about the murder of Nancy Spungen.



15. Horror Hotel

Although it uses the same name as 1960's *Horror Hotel* (better known in the UK as *City of the Dead*), the lyrics in this song bear little resemblance to the film. Instead, Danzig writes about his "girlfriend" Vampira and invites people up to Room 21 for a monster mash.

16. Mephisto Waltz

The song was only released by the Misfits but never recorded. Danzig would later record it with band photographer Eerie Von. It is likely a reference to the 1971 horror film of the same name, or possibly Franz Liszt's orchestral virtuoso.

17. Night of the Living Dead

One of the few 'mainstream' horror films to become a part of the Misfits canon was George Romero's original zombie gore fest. Ultra-melodic guitar and wails make a perfect soundtrack to lines about flesh being ripped to shredded wheat.

18. Queen Wasp

Roger Corman's low-budget female version of *The Fly*, *Wasp Woman* was deemed worthy of becoming a hard-hitting number courtesy of the Misfits. Later covered by Electric Frankenstein on a 7-inch using the classic *Wasp Woman* poster as cover art.

19. Return of the Fly

"Return of the Fly/With Vincent Price/Helen Delambre/Francois/Cecile." Speaking of *The Fly*, the film's sequel became a source of inspiration for the Misfits' classic lounge track. The lyrics run through the film's cast and characters. Just one thing: we don't recall Helen Delambre showing up in the sequel!



20. Skulls

"And the blood drains down like devil's rain." The 1975 Shogun-style *Devil's Rain* earns a reference on this *Fiend*-favorite. There's enough skull-pooling imagery here to tie the song together with the movie's tale of Satanists who hold the power to melt their victims.

21. Teenagers from Mars

This title seems to combine two equally hokey B-films, *Teenagers from Outer Space* and *Invaders from Mars*. Lyrically, Danzig describes teenage rebellion as a "B-film born invasion."



22. The Undertaker and His Pals

The Misfits didn't use this 1966 horror-comedy as a song title, but it did become the title of an unofficial live T-shirt, and later a poster and T-shirt.

23. Vampira

"Black dress moves in a blue movie/Graverebbers from outer space." The 'Fits got to most their favorite ghost when the *Walk Among Us* tour brought them to Southern California. Rumour has it, it was Vampira's first public appearance in many a year. The lyrics lean toward Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space* as source material.

24. Walk Among Us

The title of the Misfits' 1982 album is likely a nod to the third Gill-Man feature, *The Creature Walks Among Us*. This title was later used for a song on 1986's *American Psycho*, but those lyrics reflect more of an *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* plot.

25. We Are 138

Easily one of Danzig's most ambiguous songs, *We Are 138* is an ode to George Lucas' early sci-fi dystopian drama *THX 1138*.

Aaron Lupton

this was the real reason for his absence.

From here on, the controversy and infighting surrounding the new Misfits would overshadow everything else. After several dates, Hideo and Graves returned, and in October 1999, the Misfits released *Famous Monsters*, featuring artwork from the legendary magazine's masterful artist, Basil Gogos. The Misfits then joined World Championship Wrestling, performing alongside Canadian wrestler Vampiro, a period that could be considered a low point in the band's history. The bright lights and overblown comic book glitz of the world of professional wrestling was far removed from the underground mystery of the band's original incarnation. As fate would have it, the wrestling stint would prove to be the straw that broke the Misfits back. Spiraling into deeper controversy that involved a public feud with Vampiro, the band disappeared off the map.

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD?

As if an afterthought, in February 2000, Chad issued a statement on his website that he, Graves and Doyle had left the Misfits. Even so, miraculously, the band somehow resigned themselves, only to disintegrate yet again shortly thereafter. At an Oct. 25, 2000 show in Orlando, Florida, the Misfits kept fans waiting until well after 1 a.m. A few songs into the set, Graves announced it would be his final performance. Several songs later, Graves, Chad, and Doyle left the stage. Only was left by himself to play their classic *We Are 138* solo, and that, for all intents and purposes, was the end of the Misfits.

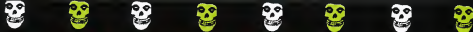
And yet despite that, the Misfits endured to the end of 2002, the year that marks their 25th anniversary. Jerry Only, increasingly the sole name associated with the ongoing legacy, toured the band solo with guest musicians Marky Ramone and Dez Cadena; their set included songs from The Ramones and Black Flag.

Even now rumours are surfacing yet again of the imminent return of Evil Elvis to the Misfits, but there is good reason to believe that these rumours are just that. The feud between Danzig and Only is long and bitter, and Danzig has firmly rejected similar offers many times in the past.

Having said that, the return of Danzig to the band that started it all could possibly be the highest profile horror rock event of all time. If the horror gods do indeed look favourably upon us, then, please, let all hell break loose one more time. Whatever happens from here on end, *Rue Morgue* wishes you a Happy Birthday, Misfits. ☹



The Misfits through the years and (bottom) Jerry Only with Japanese horror rockers Batzac.



Dismembering the MISFITS

Members, ex-members, fans and Fiends recall the experience...

ARTHUR COOZY

Formerly: Misfits drummer

Currently: Vocalist for Unrunkin under the name Blesroc

Why are the Misfits continuing? I gotta say two words: Jerry Only. You can stop playing or you can keep on playing. I always went to rehearsals and I made my drum parts as best I can. The music is the stuff that ends up staying. I'd like to say: where's Glenn? I miss him. Haven't heard from him in a long time. How's Doyle? God bless him. It was a good time, we had a lot of fun. I feel I played the drums best on *Walk Among Us*. We were hitting a groove there. Jerry, Bobby, Doyle, Glenn, they were nice guys.

FRANÇÉ COMA

Formerly: Misfits guitarist

Currently: Asset Management Director of Operations for IBM

The secret to the Misfits' endurance is that you still have people out there playing the music, and that always helps. What happens is that I see kids buying records that weren't even born when we were playing. So the stuff goes on, people get into it, a friend tells a friend, people buy the records and it just keeps things alive. And it was good music; Glenn wrote good music, no if, and or butts about it. His songs were good, they were catchy, and the songwriter makes the band. It was a great experience for me. We were young. I wish I would have been a little older at the time 'cause I would have been a lot more mature. I didn't know what we had, none of us did I don't think. But Glenn had some foresight to see up ahead. I think I helped to lay the foundation. You have to realize that before the Misfits was a band, it was Glenn playing piano along with a bass and a drummer. They played live a couple of times and after that I joined the band as their first guitar player, and I think it helped lay the foundation for what you had then and what you have now. I would love to do something again with the Misfits, but the fact of the matter is that the Misfits would only be the Misfits if Glenn was singing and — no offense to Jerry — but I'd love to do a reunion with all the original members. That to me is a reunion.

MR. JIM

Formerly: Misfits drummer

Currently: Adult video retailer

I think the songs were always really good, everything had a good sound to it and it was easy to follow. As far as the endurance part of it, I have no idea, frankly. It surprises me. I just pretty much did my part, I was a pretty decent drummer. It's certainly more popular now than it was then.

BOBBY STEELE

Formerly: Misfits guitarist

Currently: Vocalist/songwriter for The Undead.

I think it was the mystique that led to the appeal — very few people have ever seen the actual band, and it was this veil of mystery that caused a large part of our success. If it hadn't been for Metallica, no one would have heard of us. I was responsible for the earliest press, thanks to my wild, drug-crazed antics of those days, but it was mainly Glenn's great songwriting and sense of humor that really set us apart from the rest of the bands.

DR. CHUD

Formerly: Misfits drummer

Currently: Unknown.

If I don't have anything nice to say, I won't say anything at all.

EERIE VON

Formerly: Misfits roadie and photographer.

Currently: Unknown.

The Misfits had image, they wore makeup, and dismissed the political and social topics a lot of the hardcore bands were into, in favor of grade B horror movies and things that go bump in the night. They had great songs, Glenn's brilliant voice, the records that documented those achievements and the aloof assault of their live shows. Back then you either loved them or you hated them, I guess it's still that way today. I think Jerry is a great showman, and a master at self-promotion. I applaud the fact that he was able to secure the band a major record deal, and constantly keep the band's name and image in the public eye.

Who else could get Misfits action figures and lunch boxes made? The Misfits legacy is a great and turbulent one, one that has been long-lasting. But in the end, the songs remain, along with the image and the stories of those great live shows. That is what ultimately will sustain the legend.

MYKE HIDEOUS

Currently: Penning the book *King of an Empire to the Shoes of a Misfit*, available through 1stbooks.com.

Formerly: Toured with the Misfits as a vocalist circa 1988.

Personally I think it's over for the Misfits. There's nothing original about them anymore. I tried intensely to give them the edge they so needed to regroup the fan base that liked the Misfits for being a true to life evil horror band. The Misfits died when Darog left. End of story.

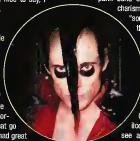
STEVE ZINC

Formerly: Undead drummer.

Currently: Singer for Doombree.

In 1978, Doyle suggested that I watch his brother's band at a practice. From the moment I heard and saw the Misfits, I knew this would have an effect on me. The Misfits were unlike any other punk band out there. Glenn was very charismatic and I said to myself,

"someday, I'm gonna work with this guy!" I didn't even know him! I think what has made them so appealing for 25 years, is a combination of music and image. I don't think there is any other band in the world that has left a lasting impression, from the *Crimson Ghost* to the *Devil Rock* hairstyle. Anytime you see anyone with one of these shirts or have their hair in their face, you know where it came from. I don't think the Misfits ever set out to have such a legacy.



JERRY ONLY

Currently: Misfits co-founder/bassist and surviving original member.

I'm happy to be in this band, it's a band I want to be in. Everyday I get up, I'm proud to be a Misfit.

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 America. Here's the story on how these Dead Doll Morticians did it,
 and what they have in store for you next....

DAWN OF THE LIVING DEAD DOLLS

by Rod Gudino

They're dead. Pure evil. They sleep with the worms. And everyone who's laid eyes on them has wanted to adopt the Living Dead Dolls and take them home forever. Problem is, there are only a precious few of these terrible tykes running around, making them a highly valued commodity among collectors groups on the convention circuit and especially on eBay, where they have a habit of being auctioned off at exorbitant rates.

Smurfs they ain't, but beware, The Living Dead Dolls are becoming just as popular, and the demand to own them is reaching the kind of mass hysteria that once had you and your friends (well, dead, maybe your sister and her friends) running off to buy up every Cabbage Patch Kid in sight. What is it about these dolls in particular that has people dishing out as much as \$40 US for a new release and \$1200 US for a prototype? What is it about them that has people dressing like Living Dead Dolls and gathering on news groups to trade stories?

The answer: precisely 10" of posable plastic, with rooted hair, a cloth costume and Death Certificate — all wrapped in distinctive coffin box

packaging. That's it, though truth be told, these little undead critters are definitely more than the sum of spare parts. Pierced, tattooed, bloody, fanged, demon possessed and always very dead, the Living Dead Dolls are unique, unwholesome and have a lot of personality... and personality goes a long way.

Maybe this might explain why public demand does not end with the dolls themselves, but has extended to Limited Edition dolls, exclusive lines, Dead Doll minis, barware, parties, stickers, journals, pens and even pencil sharpeners (stick the pencil in its eye and the shavings are regurgitated through the mouth). No doubt about it, Living Dead Doll creators Ed Long and Damien Glonek, along with worldwide Dead Doll distributor Mezco Toyz, can do no wrong when it comes to these little pale-skinned folk, except maybe not make enough of them. But that's all part of the master plan, at least, according to Long and Glonek, 'cause when there's no room left on the shelf, the Dead will have their day....

Rue Morgue spoke to Ed Long and Damien Glonek in August.

How did the Living Dead Dolls originate exactly?

Ed: I found some blank dolls that my mom had lying around and they looked pretty pale to me. She wanted to make them into angels and I asked her if I could fool around with them instead, and the first doll that came out of it was a variant of Sade — the same type of black dress, and pretty much the same haircut. And I showed it to some people, Damien being one of them, and he suggested I put them on his table at the next convention and they sold out in the first night. And that happened a couple of times and by that point I had the idea of a Posee, put it out, and they began selling very well. So Damien and I teamed up and we started making them together. We came up with the name "Living Dead Dolls," and he came up with the coffin packaging, and we took it from there.

Unlike most popular horror figures out there, the Living Dead Dolls are not based on a movie or a book. Why do you think they have taken off the way they have without the help of that tie-in?

Ed: My guess would be that everyone who has

1ST EXHUMED SERIES



SN

She comes with a pitchfork and the red in her eyes matches her horns and tail. \$50 - \$80*

*All prices in US dollars from deaddoll.com. If LP



EGGCRISST

Comes with bunny jammies, Easter basket and painted cockroach. Also made in an extremely rare blood Splattered Limited Edition. \$90 - \$120



DAMIEN

The little guy has his own shotgun and three books to read and bleed, including 490 and The Necronomicon. \$90 - \$80



SADE

The original Living Dead Doll, Sade has one white eye, the other black and comes with a bloodied kerf, coffin purse and bouquet of black flowers. \$50 - \$65



POSEY

Based on the blind girl Emily in Lucio Fulci's The Beyond, Posey has a lovely facial scar and a gash on her forehead. \$125 - \$250

led a darker life has had a desire to have an alternative to Barbie, and they have for quite some time. I think a lot of people have been customizing dolls for a while, we were doing the right thing at the right time.

Damien: We kind of filled a niche in the market that was there and we took advantage of it. Everyone was worried about doing stuff that we already know, and not doing anything creative or original with their own ideas. And there was nothing else out there like it; I think that's one of the things that we had going for us. There was no doll that was anything like we had; it was a totally new product.

Ed: The fact that it doesn't belong to a movie at this point — that there's nothing dictating exactly what it is — gives a little bit to the actual doll. People look at it and get what they want out of it. I think the characters are really strong, but the reason our fanbase is so huge is because these people are creating their own little stories around these characters. They have their own idea. And I think that actually helps it a lot, it becomes a lot larger than one tiny little story or idea.

Where do the individual characters come from?

Ed: Basically we just sit around and we create a list of ideas of the things we would like to see. Damien and I have known each other for a long time, so when we get together and we're hanging around talking about these things, it can get pretty funny. That's basically where a lot of the ideas come from. We were a little bit worried because it seemed that we were getting kind of pigeonholed into certain things. People would be like "what about a scalped Pagan and dead Indian doll?" — all this kind of stuff. And we thought, well, we don't want everything to be just that; we want the characters to stand on their own. We don't want everything to be just a bogus characterization based around stock themes. We wanted to throw



Empire of the Dolls: The Living Dead Doll market continues to expand into a slew of themed merchandise.

in *Lois* or *Bride of Valentine*, where you can't quite put your finger on them and the character itself is strong enough.

You're riffing off of monster culture, S&M, punk, voodoo, serial killers you name it. Is it fair to say that the dolls are an amalgamation of counter-cultural ideas?

Ed: Absolutely. Our biggest guideline that we go by is we won't make this if we don't like it. That's the best part of making these dolls. When we're making them, we can't wait to see them and have them. By the time we've finished the prototypes, it's almost impossible to give them to Mezzco to have him work them. We always want to keep them, they're too awesome.

Damien: It's all coming from our influences. It's not a "let's do a Marilyn Monroe doll because it would sell well" type thing. I'm not into Marilyn Monroe so you'll never see one. We've turned down a lot of offers from other companies to do

sub-licensing and mergers and stuff like that. Financially, maybe it would have been a good idea, but we're just not into it.

What kind of feedback do you get from the people who would drop \$500 for one of these dolls? Who are they?

Ed: The feedback's been amazing; I think the people are so varied. We get just as many housewives as we get goth kids. As a matter of fact, there's not a very large goth audience for these things, at least from what we see. Most of the people at the conventions are just normal people who don't really look extravagant or like to dress up as a goth. They just tend to be people who may not like to collect anything else, who just saw these, loved them and they just went from there. What amazes me the most is the lack of hate mail, the negative aspect. We did a nun and a priest doll and we got no flack, we got no hate mail and not receiving any hate mail really surprises me. We got one letter so far, one from a

SERIES II: CLASS DECEASED!



NITTY

This tiny cheerleader comes with "Go Seton" buttons and a pair of black pompadour. Her shoes are red with black tips the opposite of Lou Sapphire's black shoes with red tips. \$20 - \$50



LIZZY BORDEN

This cute raveress killed her parents with 40 whistles and comes complete with bloody axe and antique boots. \$20 - \$45



SCHOOLTIME SADIE

Ready for school, Sadie wears her uniform blazer, white blouse and pleated skirt. \$25 - \$55



DEDONA ANN

Dedona Ann is ready for the prom with her flower bouquet, removable golden skull tiara and sash that reads "Queen Mezzco". \$20 - \$40



LOU SAPPHIRE

Louvely Lou is a lesbian with this Sabatini contract, ruby ring on his left pinky, and a cane with removable skull head. \$25 - \$40



mother who's really disturbed because her daughter had purchased Posey, and her big beef was how could we make a toy like that for kids? And I'm sorry, but nowhere does it say Living Dead Kid, it says Living Dead Doll, and there's a big difference there. But we haven't been receiving that backlash from anyone, which means that everyone seems to be getting it. Everything's been really, really positive.

Damen: We broke a line in the market—that we have people who collect our dolls that aren't into toys, even though we're involved in the toy market. People who buy our stuff don't necessarily buy other things, they're not collecting Barbie or anything. We've taken people who were never into toys and brought them into the toy industry.

Even though you're on Series IV, the dolls continue to be extremely limited. Why is that?

Ed: We want to keep a minimum because, first off, in starting something, you never know how it's going to fly. But more importantly, we want to offer the collector something and the only way to do that nowadays is to do it yourself. If you come out with Series I and you say "that's it," then don't screw these people six months later and re-release the first series so that no one wants it. Because what happens is, regardless of however many your first run is, these people will end up buying it from a dealer and it will be far more than what they want to pay for it. And then if you turn around six months later and re-release it, their money just went down the toilet. We get a lot of back for it, but it's our way of not flooding the market, it's our giving to collectors and our way to give to our fans something that really is kind of sacred, something that is valuable and worth something. Damen and I could have flooded the market with these things, put out hundreds of thousands of them, made a lot of money and got out, but as it stands, we still have our day

jobs, we still bust our asses. People somehow think we're these millionaires, that we're doing real good and we don't care—it couldn't be further from the truth. We work a twelve-hour day, come home and then work another eight hours on something that you absolutely love. And we do it because we love it; we

do it because we want these people to have something that truly is incredible. We're so hell-bent on keeping it so that people have something unique. You pay \$24.95 and six to eight months later, they're going for \$100, \$120 dollars. Yeah it's bad if you're on the losing end of it, but what about the fans who were there from the beginning? It's worth just as much to them.

Will that policy change someday?

Damen: We're not looking for a fly by night thing, we're looking for longevity, and we don't want to burn out everything right away. We know we're always in demand, people are always craving more; it enables us to last longer.

How many are you manufacturing of the new Series IV?

Damen: 5,000 of each doll, so 40,000 total.

That was more than last year?

Damen: Yup, and that was more than Series I or II.

You're happy with those numbers?

Ed: Yes we are. Nobody should really be mad about it because if you really need it, you can still find it, you know?



What do you say to the fans that hear about it too late and they have to fork over tons of money just to get themselves one of the dolls?

Ed: We don't control that, we don't make any money off of that. We certainly don't want to see dealers taking advantage of our fans, but I think nine times out of ten, they're getting a pretty fair

deal. We cannot control bidding on eBay. I feel bad, but at least they're not buying something that six months down the road is going to be worth less than what they paid for it. If they were willing to pay—guess what?—someone else will be willing to pay. It just is what it is, I feel bad but sometimes peo-

ple can't get everything.

Damen: A lot of the stuff it's the thrill of the hunt too, 'cause once they track it down, the private collector is really thinking "wow!" whereas the casual buyer is complaining for having to wait in line for forty-five minutes to get the doll, you know? They go around hunting this shit down and they get a big thrill once they find it. We're probably one of the few companies that have such a tight-knit relationship with our fan base. We do everything and pretty much answer all the e-mails personally, so we're hearing every comment.

What kind of question are you most asked?

Both: Where can I buy the dolls?

One way you're getting around the limited number is through Limited Editions and offshoot merchandising. What do you have coming out?

Damen: We saw the potential that this can be

SERIES III: THE DEAD SHALL RISE AGAIN



BRIDE OF VALENTINE

This Gothic bride died during the St. Valentine's day massacre of 1929. She wears a short lace wedding dress and holds a bloody heart in her hand. \$29 - \$40



LUTITE

The first Living Dead Doll with her own unique facial expression (a screaming fanged mouth). LUTITE is a one-of-a-kind vampire doll complete with blue skin and wooden stake. \$29 - \$40



SCHITZ

This macabre little clown sports a smart hat and comes with his own balloons. \$29 - \$40



LUTITE

This slinky gothic girl comes with an umbrella that opens and closes and has a skull knick. \$22 - \$40



SHEENA

Dressed to kill with a motorcycle jacket with "Punk Not Dead" on the back, a lip ring, a "No Future" t-shirt, ripped fishnet thigh-highs and a bloody, spiked baseball bat. Sheena is named after the Ramones' song Sheena Is a Punk Rocker. \$29 - \$50

PLAYING WITH PAIN

Clive Barker and Todd McFarlane
unveil *Tortured Souls 2*

by Rod Gudin

When it comes to gruesome toys, look no further than Clive Barker and Todd McFarlane, two genre giants who took grotesque to a whole new level last year when they released those *Tormented Souls* figures that to this day have to be seen to be believed.

And guess what? They're doing it again, with the release of *Tortured Souls 2: The Fallen*, in stores by the time you read this. And if you thought the last line took things to the extreme, take a look again.

"I'd say this one has more emphasis on torture," McFarlane chimes in happily during a phonecall from Arizona. "The first one was sort of a nice name, I mean, we tortured a few faces and everything, but on this one we have a little bit more."

Meet *The Fallen*, five very sorry looking individuals who make it impossible to look at them without wincing: Scatix, a grotesque six-limbed

creature grasping mechanical prosthetics; Camille Noire, a winged, angelic creature whose cranium had a run-in with a circular saw; Zain, who has been strapped onto a pole and features several mechanical appendages; Suffering Bob, the aberrant mutation of several human beings into one abomination; Moribundi, unfortunate enough to have been crucified at the altar of science and technology and, lastly, Fevenish, a large, disgusting thing giving birth to worms on a slab. Manufactured with an eye for detail, *The Fallen* are by far the most intricate and complex figures to grace our offices ever.

"It's a bit of a pain but the pain comes in on the amount of time and effort it takes the actual sculptor to do the work," says McFarlane, whose company has brought an entirely new level of craftsmanship to the toy industry. "Instead of being able to sculpt the toy in a week, it might take them two and half weeks, and a week and a half of that is just noodling the crap out of it. You might have the basic form and you know it's got a big black leather arm, but the arm just can't be sleek, we have to put straps and hooks and textures, get it to look like burlap or dry crackled lizard skin or whatever. Luckily I'm dealing with people on the sculpting end who take pride. Everyone's always trying to outdo the last line and this is the one now that has sort of raised the bar."

McFarlane and Barker also plan to raise the bar by developing a horror movie franchise out of their gruesome creation. But be warned; those expecting a blood-soaked blowout the likes of the *Hellraiser* movies may be sorely disappointed. McFarlane reveals that he and Barker are entertaining ideas that bear a stronger kinship to the more subtle shocks of Alfred Hitchcock and M. Night Shyamalan (*Sixth Sense*).

"One thing that Clive and I are always talking about is that we don't always want to give them what they think they're going to get. We want to put a few surprises out there," he says. "So Clive wrote this outline that allows us to do psychological terror as well as physical horror. We don't want to be a grand epic, we want to go back to *The Exorcist* or *The Omen*, where it's contained in a small area. I think M. Night really understands how to isolate the story — instead of making them big, he's actually folding them inward. Hollywood has a tendency to go 'let's do *Independence Day*,' but this guy is smart enough to come at it from the back end. It brings in some of the stuff that Hitchcock did, and more recent work, like John Carpenter's *The Thing*. Isolation adds to the mystery and intrigue and the paranoia levels and all those other things, and it gets people jumping in their chairs, which is different from slasher horror."

As of press time, Universal has secured rights to that idea and has even sat down with the pair on several occasions to go over some developments. The possibilities look good and, as McFarlane points out, there are certain advantages to making a movie from a toy.

"Part of the reason that something is evocative is that nobody is giving you any history," he says. "You just look at it and apply whatever you want to it. It's more interesting to look at a guy who's got a nail through his head and can lift half his head off and go, 'how the hell did he get that? Is he a good guy or a bad guy? Is he in pain?' Just from the images in front of you, just from the concepts, you go, 'what kind of fuckin' mind does that come from?' And we have the ability to do anything with it. We can just go 'now, he's the newspaper boy; he's just had a bad day!'" ☞



Ed Long (left) and Damien Glowek, creators and funeral directors.

much more than it is, so that's when we started making our own t-shirts, and we made a portfolio — it was a series of four drawings that told this short little four-page story. Ed wrote it, I drew it, we printed it up and we put them into an envelope and we used to do that from home. At the time, it was done by us but once Mo'Nzo came in it all got mass marketed and word got out and they were originally for five bucks and they skyrocketed into massive amounts of money. Overnight they were \$60 just because the demand was there. And we numbered them, only fifty made and after they're gone we weren't making any more. They're all limited edition.

You guys are hardcore! What else?

Damien: We have stickers, pens, barware, pants, journals, pencil sharpeners...

Has anyone approached you about doing a movie about these things?

Damien: We've had some offers but we didn't want to jump on the first thing that came by, you know. We want to do it, we'll do it right, it takes time, so be it. We'll wait for the best time, there's no rush.

Ed: We know that the product has an amazing

You plan on bringing them to life somehow?

Ed: Absolutely, that's the whole thing. We don't want to be just putting out a series of dolls followed by another series of dolls, we want to show people that there is a lot more going on there. We haven't finished everything, but we have talked for a long time about how things can go, and what the world these dolls live in might be like. We don't want to really give too much of that away but, yes, there is a whole unique place in the corner of some universe where these things exist and obviously it's going to be really creepy, it's going to be really cutting edge. It may have started with just the Death Certificate, but one of our biggest ventures right now is that Living Dead Doll world, to kind of open it up. There's the possibility of a board game to start things off, a story book, some things to get people more involved so they know more where we're coming from.

What kind of vibe are you giving them?

Damien: Sinister and sadistic.

Ed: If there was a perfect land of living dolls and everything was bright and cheery so you didn't

look, we know we have some strong characters, and something that people can look forward to in the upcoming year is either story books and/or comic books that will offer a platform into the realm of entertainment, so that people can see that there's more to it. There is a Living Dead Doll universe, there is a whole place where these things exist.

even know the opposite of good, how would you know what evil was? If something would go horribly wrong, if one of these dolls should die, if something really terrible would happen in paradise, where would it go from there? What kind of stuff could we evoke at that point, what could we really pull up out of the guts of utopia? Is being constantly happy really the ultimate good? There's a lot that we can play with there.

What are your other plans for the future?

Damien: We want to make the same doll but larger and out of porcelain it would be a one-of-a-kind doll, only one made, and we would be going back to what we used to do by painting them by hand and have gallery shows.

Would these be a larger version of the dolls that already exist?

Damien: More of an elaboration of the existing characters, more elaborate in costume and things like that. The next thing that would be cool if we made it by hand is to make every doll different.

So in one way you are moving towards the commercial, but in another, you're getting right back to your artistic roots.

Damien: Yup, that's exactly right.

What do you guys do for a living anyway?

Ed: I basically help people walk, people with hip deformities, diabetes, people who have trouble moving around. I create lymphatic devices in order to aid them in ambulation.

Damien: I work for the government. [laughter]

That explains a lot! ☺

www.livingdead dolls.com

SERIES IV: DOLLS TO DIE FOUR



SYBIL

Wrapped in a strait jacket, Sybil's girl wild spiral eyes, messy hair, a crooked grin and green goo dripping out of her mouth. \$20-45



MACOMBA

This pint-sized voodoo priest comes with white skull painted on his face, a top hat, long black dreadlocks and a bone necklace. \$20-45



LULU

She sports pigtail, a ballerina lulu, tube socks, pink-wheeled roller skates, and a "Hell on Wheels" tattoo, not to mention an adorable bone fracture on her leg. \$20-45



INFERNO

A devilish little spirit, Inferno wears her black flame-trimmed dress with her bewitching red socks and black Mary Janes. She has little black horns, wavy red hair, red eyes, and red demon wings. \$20-45



MISS FERNE

The tiny Miss has blank, pink-lined eyes, white hair and wears her black robe morning dress and a black, wide-brimmed hat with a spider web veil. \$20-45

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THE MOVIE MAY HAVE BEEN HIGH CONCEPT SATANIC BOMBAST, BUT JERRY GOLDSMITH'S SCORE FOR *THE OMEN* IS STILL AS CHILL-INDUCING AS IT EVER WAS....

The Devil's Leitmotif

BY JOHN W. BOWEN



Jaws and *Halloween* are shining examples of effective soundtrack music heightening atmosphere in film, even to the point where the music itself becomes a widely recognized trademark, but *The Omen* remains a breed apart: a film that probably owes the bulk of its success to its music score alone. While it is rightly considered a modern horror classic, it's not without some serious flaws which become especially painful upon repeated viewings. Bloated, bombastic and overserious, *The Omen* comes dangerously close to caving in under its own pomposity, its complete lack of humour often resulting in some unintentionally hilarious moments.



It may be a pivotal piece in the canon of seventies Satanic cinema, but its stonefaced austerity (personified by leading man Gregory Peck) makes it something of a poor country cousin to the visceral shocks of *The Exorcist* and the subtle, gnawing paranoia that fuels *Rosemary's Baby*. So why does it still work? Why, decades later, does *The Omen* still manage to creep out even the most jaded viewer? Many – including this admittedly jaded writer – chalk it up to Jerry Goldsmith's music score.



With credits as diverse and acclaimed as *Patton*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Chinatown* and *Papillon* under his belt, Goldsmith was already one of the most successful composers in the film industry when he was approached by director Richard Donner and producer Harvey Bernhard in 1974 to provide music for their upcoming apocalyptic thriller.

Contrary to popular belief, *The Omen* was actually a rather modestly budgeted production and Goldsmith – very much the It Boy of film composers in the seventies – was well beyond the film's original price range.

But Donner, convinced that Goldsmith wasn't just the best choice but the only choice, approached Fox studio boss Alan Ladd Jr. and persuaded him to kick in the remaining funds required to bring the composer on board (proof perhaps that, in days of yore, studio bosses occasionally made the right decisions). Ladd's move would bear him out; *The Omen* immediately became a box office smash, spawning three sequels (two theatrical and one made-for-TV) and Goldsmith would walk away with his first Academy Award for Best Score.

A soundtrack album, released around the same time as the film, was nominated for a Grammy and sold extremely well despite the fact that many important music cues from the film weren't included; the album was subsequently released on CD in 1990 after Varese Sarabande bought up the rights. That same label – virtually synonymous with film music – has recently released deluxe editions of the soundtrack from *The Omen* and its first two sequels, each containing the complete score plus some previously unreleased odds and ends.

Ave Satani, the film's main title cue, is possibly the singlenmost chilling piece of music ever written exclusively for a horror film, an unrelentingly dark work for choir and orchestra. (Other equally effective pieces have been deployed in films like *The Exorcist* and *The Shining*, but were not written specifically for those films.) Possibly because Goldsmith had the choir sing in Latin, Ave Satani has often been mistakenly compared to Gregorian chant; this is inaccurate for a number of reasons, chiefly because of the inclusion of an orchestra, but also because actual Gregorian chant never featured female voices.

Instead, Goldsmith drew inspiration for his *Omen* score from another classical music archetype: the requiem, a choral mass for the dead. From Mozart to Verdi and far beyond, the process of writing a requiem has always been viewed by composers as an endeavour of gravest importance, and it's hardly surprising that very few of them – including

even the prolific Mozart – ever wrote more than one. Mozart, Brahms and Faure created requiems memorable for their serene, austere beauty, while Berlioz and several others elected rather less successfully to evoke Judgement Day with unrestrained bombast. Goldsmith, however, would turn this venerable idiom on its head, deploying choral and orchestral forces to spectacular effect in an elaborate and sinister hymn to Satan. Goldsmith's soundtrack features a number of other startling pieces, but Ave Satani remains *The Omen*'s dark heart, and the composer would scatter various references to its theme throughout the film.

With only a few exceptions, horror film sequels go a long way in lending credibility to the law of diminishing returns, and subsequent entries in *The Omen* series present no exception. Despite a few innovative scare sequences and some truly inspired casting – Jonathan Scott-Taylor as the adolescent Damien and Sam Neill as a thirty-something Antichrist – *The Omen* sequels try hard to become even more deadly serious and of course succeed only in becoming more laughable. The problem is compounded by the fact that each film had a different director and cast; aside from the storyline itself, Goldsmith's remarkable music would be the only constant, providing some desperately-needed continuity. The corresponding soundtrack albums from Varese Sarabande find Goldsmith mining the Ave Satani theme again with varying degrees of success – at best he actually reinvents the music, and at worst recycles it – along with some newer and typically effective pieces.

Goldsmith's tremendous versatility is evidenced on several other releases on the same label; it's especially remarkable on an album that combines music he wrote for two other thrillers in the seventies, *The Mephisto Waltz* and *The Other*. Other Varese Sarabande releases of Goldsmith's soundtracks include *Planet of the Apes*, *Leviathan*, *Hollow Man* and *Pollergest*. In some, releasing all three *Omen* soundtracks simultaneously may very well seem like overkill. But chances are the folks at Varese Sarabande are well aware that – with the notable exception of *Trekks* – few completists are as pathologically obsessive as horror fans. ☹



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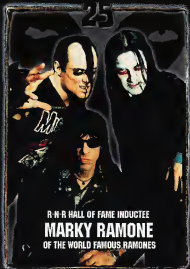


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CINEMACABRE

RINGS TRUE

THE RING

Starring Naomi Watts, Martin Henderson
and Brian Cox
Directed by Gore Verbinski
Written by Ehren Kruger
Dreamworks Pictures

I have just seen the much anticipated film *The Ring*, the American remake of Hideo Nakata's popular supernatural thriller *Ringu*. Admittedly, being a fan of the scary-as-shit Japanese original, my expectations were just below low. After all, those gun toting, flag-wavin'-happy-ending-lovin' yanks have an ugly track record of raping foreign films, ripping off and reinventing them for the shopping mall multiplex set. Just take a look at what Universal made George Sluizer do to his pitch black *The 400 Blows*, completely altering the heart-stopping buried-alive climax in order to let the hero get the girl.

So when the closing credits began to crawl over Gore Verbinski's honky-tonk update, I was shocked to find myself completely satisfied not only with Verbinski's *The Ring* just as dark and almost as under the skin subtle as Nakata's film, but that ending was intact. I won't get into explicit detail as to what happens during that brain warping wrap up; those of you who dampened your Depends the first time around know what I'm talking about. It's there. And while not as fluidly horrific as Nakata's shocking cut, thanks to a new, albeit minor surprise jolt, it'll still kill ya.

The film – to those of you not in the know – is about a video tape. You pop this anonymous piece of spastic plastic into your VCR and a really eerie collection of grainy black and white Dali/Buñuel-esque images skitter across the screen: a ghostly woman combs her hair in an antique mirror, dying horses twitch in the surf, giant centipedes scuttle out from beneath chairs, bloody fingers twitch in a match box and then the final image, a ghostly well. Then static. Almost immediately the phone will ring. You'll answer it only to be told that in seven days



The Ring: A really scary movie, despite the Hollywood hokum

you'll die. Yikes! Sounds like an interactive William Castle gimmick flack, but no, this vicious videotape makes good on its promise, and hingo bango, before you know it many curious innocents are cursed with the worst.

Watching Dreamworks' big-budget redux, I got to thinking: sure, Naomi (*Mulholland Drive*) Watts' performance as a sexy single mom drawn into the mystery by the haunted half inch is kinda hammy and exaggerated. And sure, some of the dialogue is ripe and doesn't make a lot of sense and admittedly the film as a whole isn't quite as nightmarish if you've seen the Japanese version. But see, I'm not Japanese. I don't speak Japanese. I've never lived or worked or voted or raised children in Japan.

So was the original scarier to me because it was in a foreign language? More unsettling because it was set in a culture alien to my own? Of a higher calibre because the film was seemingly exotic and yet most likely adhered to a whole other set of clichés and genre standards?

I wonder.

The Ring is obviously not a terribly innovative picture, but it is scary, it really is. And if it lapses into Hollywood hokum that's because, well, it's made by North Americans for a North American market. That's what happens. And jaded horror geeks like you and I tend to grow bored with our own cinematic culture so we condemn it, looking across the pond for inspiration. It's a natural artistic reaction.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that a lot of North American fans of the cultish original will probably hate *The Ring*. This is because it takes an Asian concept (albeit one borrowed from both Cronenberg's *Videodrome* and Peter Medak's *The Changeling*) and, without changing the basic plot or sequence of events, adapts it to a western way of life, with distinctly American sensibilities.

I've watched enough barrel-swinging genre pics in my time to know crap when I see it. And Verbinski's *The Ring*, friends, is better than bad...it's good!

Chris Alexander



Red Dragon: Hopkins is great, Norton's a natural and Fienness is all wrong.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE TRAGIC

RED DRAGON

Starring Anthony Hopkins, Ed Norton and Ralph Fienness
Directed by Brett Ratner
Written by Ted Talley
Based on the novel by Thomas Harris
Universal Studios

Coming in cold to direct the third film in any well-established franchise is bound to be a challenging gig. But given the circumstances of *Red Dragon*, in that the director's chair is still warm from the posteriors of Jonathan Demme and Ridley Scott and the film in question is a remake of a pretty good one by Michael Mann, even a filmmaker as seasoned and undeniably talented as Brett Ratner is bound to experience some serious second-guessing from both without and within.

The prequel (a term that sets my teeth on edge) is usually the last in a series of lame excuses for a completely shameless sequel, but given the pedigree and the chronology of the novels, *Red Dragon* as a concept is pretty legit. Long before Special Agent Clarice Starling became fodder for a *Simpsons* parody, burnt-out ex-FBI profiler Will Graham (Norton) gets pressed back into service by his former boss (Harvey Keitel) to help track down the Tooth Fairy, a nutbar with a pen-

chant for slaughtering happy families. Like his counterpart Starling, Graham must consult the long since incarcerated Lecter (Hopkins); unlike Starling, however, Graham himself was once attacked and nearly killed by the good doctor. In now-typical Thomas Harris fashion, our protagonist's emotional baggage gets unmercifully searched by Lecter as the hunt for the killer intensifies.

Manhunter, adapted from *Red Dragon* in the eighties and released to moderate acclaim prior to the sensation that was *Silence of the Lambs*, can be more or less divorced from the equation for historical reasons, but *Lambs* and *Hannibal* each benefited from a distinct directorial flavour. Where Demme's film was lean and gritty yet graceful, Scott's was lush, operatic and gruesome, *Lambs* benefited from its faithfulness to the novel while *Hannibal* screenwriters David Mamet and Stephen Zallian drastically altered – and improved – some pretty flawed source material. *Red Dragon* certainly takes the high road in terms of the deadened transition from book to film, with an adaptation that rings of an obsessive attention to detail on par with the pains Roman Polanski took with *Rosemary's Baby*.

On a further positive note, Ratner's tremendous skill for staging spectacular yet very credible action sequences serves *Red Dragon* well; here's a guy who can jolt us and, under the right circumstances, gross us out without always having to zoom right in on a gaping wound. The cast is a director's

wet dream; at this point Hopkins, already an actor's actor since long before *Lambs*, is able to slip into Hannibal Lecter's skin like an old jeans jacket, and it's hard to imagine a more natural choice for our hattered hero than Norton.

Keitel, Emily Watson and Philip Seymour Hoffman, the patron saint of character actors, are indispensable in roles that could easily have been auctioned off to lesser talents. Fienness, on the other hand, may well be incapable of turning in a bad performance, and he certainly doesn't do his reputation any damage here, but he's a poor choice physically. He works his usual magic in making a monstrous character human and marginally sympathetic, but he's simply not a big, powerful physical presence (thus being one area in which *Manhunter* is actually superior).

Directorially, Ratner's only real downfall is a failure to sustain the tension from one money shot to the next, a problem that seems to lie in the editing room rather than the set, but one which tragically sets *Red Dragon* several rungs down from its predecessors. A worthwhile film to be sure, but also a perfect example of a kingdom lost for want of a nail.

John W. Bowen

TAKE TO THE HILLS

ELVIRA'S HAUNTED HILLS

Starring Elvira, Richard D'Onofrio and Scott Atkinson
Directed by Sam Irving
Written by Cassandra Peterson and John Paragon
Sprint Entertainment



The hills are alive once again with the screams of laughter, as the ageless Cassandra Peterson returns to bust out the big guns and even bigger puns. A light-hearted tweaking of '60s gothic horror à la Cormac's Poe adapts, *Elvira's Haunted Hills* marks the B-Queen with the D cup's return to the small-screen some fourteen years since heating up small-town New England in *Mistress of the Dark*.

This time, Elvira goes back, Hammer-style, to 1851 as the star of a risqué revue called Yes I Can-Can. On the road to Paris for opening night the Mistress of the Dark

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Elvira's Haunted Hills: Nice scenery.

and her maltreated maid-servant Zou Zou end up in a Carpathian castle said to be cursed by the family Hellsebus with the power to lead its occupants into strange and unnatural things.

Richard (Riff-Raff) O'Brien co-stars as the Lord Valdimar Hellsebus whose dead wife Elvira is a dead ringer for the busty punster, causing much confusion and indiscretion among the castle's inhabitants. Along the way, Elvira gets mixed up with John Atkinson doing his best Karloff impression, and falls in lust with muscle-head Adrian the lip-syncing stable-master.

More yawns than thrills for the most part, *Haunted Hills* suffers with little forward momentum to help bridge the screen time between one-liners (there's only so many pratfalls and G-rated burlesque numbers you can do to advance a picture, even for Elvira). *Rue Morgue* presented this back in September and, miraculously, the screening went over with the crowd, so, who knows, maybe I should be using a sliding scale for this one.

It just seems the fish-out-of-water element in *Mistress of the Dark* worked better in masking the fact that Elvira tends to work best in short bursts, and the foggy narrative of *Haunted Hills* simply doesn't supply her with enough context for her to cash in on her trademark wry, scene-stealing reactions.

Even if it was a little over-focused on hit-and-miss sight gags and tame sexual humor, I dug the gothic Romanian locations and can still respect Peterson for funding the picture herself (even though she could have done away with the wholesomeness and tossed in a cup or two of the red stuff). Unless you take more than a passing interest in Elvira herself, you may want to take a pass on her *Haunted Hills*.

Tom Dragoimir

NO SHAME IN BEING NUMBER TWO

MONSTARD

Starring Beth West and Paul Weiner
Written and directed by Rick Popko
and Dan West
4321 Films

Given the anything-goes aesthetic that fuels the current underground horror film scene, it's actually pretty surprising that no one got around to making a movie about a giant homicidal turd until now. Such an undertaking would doubtless require some serious intestinal fortitude on the part of the filmmakers. Would it be any good? Would it be, in the vernacular of today's young people, "the shit" or just shitty? Would it go down in the annals of horror film history as a cult classic, or would we flush it from our collective consciousness like so much waste?

A wise man whose name eludes me right now once opined that ninety-nine percent of everything is shit, but I'm happy to report that *Monstard* actually falls into that one elusive percentile of way-cool. Sure, the concept sounds like something Beavis and Butt-Head might come up with if they decided to become filmmakers, and that's why it's appropriate that the film's wraparound has a little girl telling the whole thing to her father as a bedtime story.

She relates the tale of escaped serial killer Jack Schmitt who dies while hiding in a small town's sewage treatment facility, just around the same time when the obligatory dangerous chemical gets dumped into the sewer system from a nearby genetic research lab. Presto! The shit monster is unleashed just prior to the town's biggest annual event — a chili cook-off — and much low-brow

hilarity ensues.

It goes without saying that this thing was made on the cheap, but filmmakers Popko and West (who also star) display some solid technical chops and they also seem well aware that novelty films only work when they don't rely entirely on their novelty status. Hence, it's not surprising that *Monstard* is built around a near-relentless series of scatological sight gags, but the visuals are backed up by a convulsively funny script. (And I'd be interested to know how Popko and West managed to score their locations, including what would appear to be a real genetic research lab, a real prison and a real sewer!) Virtually every horror film and cop show cliché gets trotted out and skewered here, and the film gets even better as references to *Jaws*, *South Park*, *Silence of the Lambs*, *Alien(s)*, *Sc'ien* and more keep... er... piling up.

No, it's not for everyone, but the sicker element of *Rue Morgue's* readership (Troma fans, I'm looking at you) are bound to find *Monstard* as satisfying as a good bowel movement. Yes, this one really moves the mail. As for myself, my butt cheeks are clenched in anticipation of Popko and West's next film. And furthermore... aw, crap. I seem to have run out of scatological references. End of review.

John W. Bowen

DAY OF THE WOLF

BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF:

3 DISC COLLECTOR'S EDITION DVD

Starring Samuel Le Bihan, Vincent Cassel
and Mark Dacascos
Directed by Christophe Gans
Written by Stephane Cabel and
Christophe Gans
TVA Films

Yep, they've done it again. As with yesterday's Collector's Edition of *Ginger Snaps*, TVA has outclassed and outdone themselves with this collector's dream DVD set of *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, director Christophe Gans' genre-bending movie that took our vote last year as "Best Foreign Film." The movie speaks for itself; a genre bustin' costume piece diced up with a double dose of





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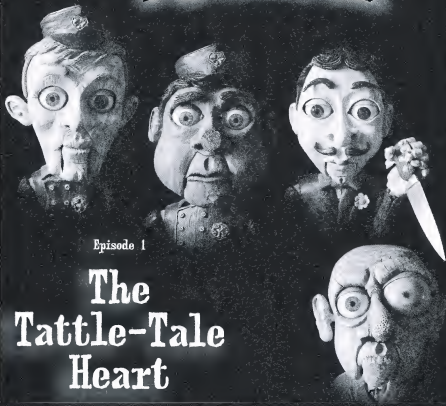
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DVD



Brotherhood: Our pick for the Best Foreign Film of 2001 gets the full DVD treatment.

horror, a heaping of mystery, some political intrigue, a sprinkling of kung fu, a little romance, and a pinch of sex... and it's all in French!

This is where the sheep get separated from the goats, so if you're still with me, read on. The three disc set contains the Bible on how *Brotherhood* was put together, every detail of the production is covered in some way. The first disc, of course, features the film in eye-catching widescreen glory (2.35:1 aspect ratio), with English and French subtitles and commentary (in French only) from director and stars. And let me tell you, it still makes for a sumptuous viewing; certainly it remains the most stylishly flamboyant genre flick to come out in recent memory.

Disc 2 offers an exhaustive Making Of featurette called "Brotherhood of the Wolf: The Guts of the Beast," wherein Gans lets us in on virtually every decision that went into making his movie. He comes across as intelli-

gent and forthright and remarkably candid about the realities—economic and otherwise—of the production, not to mention his philosophy of moviemaking. Not surprisingly, he also comes across as a guy who really knows and loves his horror, which may make his reflections of particular relevance and interest to fans and filmmakers alike. The featurette also covers sets, combat

sequences, the making of the heist and has a ton of cuttakes and behind-the-scenes footage. Some deleted scenes round off the second disc, most of which were understandably nixed from the final print, but hold interest nonetheless.

On Disc 3 you'll find storyboards, album and a bonus/bonus ROM, but it's the Making Of documentary that will keep your interest throughout. It chronicles the things that went wrong on set and will give you new appreciation for just how well *Brotherhood* turned out in the end. Last but not least, shoppers are treated to a fifteen-page colour booklet with production notes on preparation, filming, post-production and the story behind The Beast of Gévaudan 'cause, in case you didn't know it, this is also based on a true story!

Does it get any better? Well, for American readers it does; TVA plans to make the *Brotherhood of the Wolf* Collector's Edition DVD available in the US as well as in Canada. Check your local hangout.

Emma Anderson

CIMME THREE MORE!

WISHMASTER: THE PROPHECY FULFILLED
Starring Tara Spencer-Naim, John Novak
and Jason Thompson
Directed by Chris Angel
Written by John Benjamin Martin
Arts and Entertainment

Ya, I have a wish: I wish the first two *Wishmaster* sequels never happened, and that fans of the original will believe me

when I say that *Wishmaster: The Prophecy Fulfilled* will restore their faith in what began as a promising series.

Nothing really changes from sequel to sequel. Djinn in a stone, Djinn out of the stone, Djinn granting wishes, Djinn killing people, Djinn collecting souls, Djinn grants three wishes to its waker, here come the flames of hell, you know the words. The only real leap that's been taken with the series is (*Wishmaster* creator) Peter Atkins' stage production, *The Djinn*, billed as a "Rock and Roll Horror Musical". Ahem.

So if the unchanging concept is simply regurgitated with new characters each time out, then the only way it can be truly compelling is to make those characters so rich and full of longing for something they just can't live without. Enter Tara Spencer-Naim, who comes off as the greatest horror movie chick since Jamie Lee Curtis.

As the waker of the Djinn, Spencer-Naim has quite the wish. The movie opens by establishing a love affair between her and Jason Thompson, with a scene so sexy and honest and brave that, when Thompson is subsequently confined to a wheelchair, her wish to relieve that passion seems more than fair—even if it means selling her soul to a demon made of green muscles and goo. Speak of the devil: John Novak (*Wishmaster 3*) returns as the Djinn, and y'know what? This time out I didn't miss Andrew Divoff (*Wishmaster* and *Wishmaster 2*) one bit. Novak is mean enough and creepy enough and is a perfect foil to Spencer-Naim's cool yet vulnerable performance. And that's what's going on here—a script that allows for character development rather than a body count (and the body count is low, for sure) and real actors who bring credibility to a far-out fantasy tale. Oh, yeah, and some good gore, too.

It's worth mentioning that Chris Angel is also the director of *Wishmaster 3*. Apparently they shot both movies back-to-back. But don't be turned off by the fact that 3 sucked. Consider it his warm-up. In *The Prophecy Fulfilled*, he graduates with—if not honours—then certainly style.

Wishing for a great Friday night fright flick? Done.

David Dupont



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EVER DANCE WITH THE DEVIL BY THE PALE MOONLIGHT?

NEAR DARK DVD 1987

Starring Lance Henriksen and Bill Paxton

Directed by Kathryn Bigelow

Written by Kathryn Bigelow and Eric Red

Anchor Bay Entertainment

In the back half of the eighties, a popular movie about a naive young man who falls in with a nasty after-hours crowd proved that there was still plenty of bite left in the old cadaver known as the vampire. Alas, that movie was *The Lost Boys*.

Alas, because *The Lost Boys'* unwitting theatrical rival, *Near Dark*, was by far the superior of the two films (for the record, both were released in October 1987). Certainly, *The Lost Boys* was a satisfying cinematic thrill ride with a laudable enough, teen-targeted "know thyself" morale. But rather than merely preserving vampire marketability, *Near Dark* pumped brand new blood into the creature, contributing not only to its timelessness but also, more importantly, its evolution.

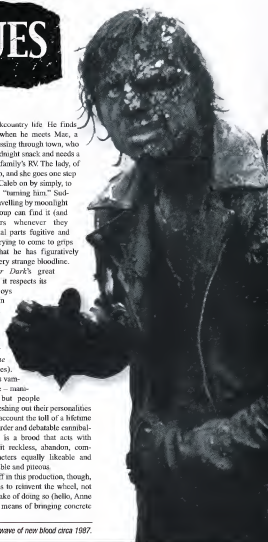
Set in the contemporary agrarian South, *Near Dark* is less a cowboy take on vampires than it is a vampire take on — believe it — family values. (That said, wild wild western imagery abounds, from the Confederate flag lining the chief vampire's trenchcoat to an OK Corral-style shootout midway through the proceedings.)

The plot's your basic fish out of water allegory. Just a good ole boy never meanin' no harm, Caleb Colton is, as his Dickensian surname suggests, a young Texan stud looking for something to relieve the existential

boredom of backcountry life. He finds that something when he meets Mae, a purty girl just passing through town, who stopped for a midnight snack and needs a ride back to her family's RV. The lady, of course, is a vamp, and she goes one step beyond turning Caleb on by simply, to quote the script, "taming him." Suddenly, Caleb's travelling by moonlight wherever the group can find it (and customized cars whenever they can't). He's equal parts fugitive and kidnap victim, trying to come to grips with the fact that he has figuratively married into a very strange bloodline.

One of *Near Dark's* great strengths is that it respects its midnight cowboys without giving in to the typical tendency to revere or vilify them (both of which, for example, *The Lost Boys* does). *Near Dark* treats vampires like people — maniacs, certainly, but people nonetheless — fleshing out their personalities and taking into account the toll of a lifetime of bloodlust, murder and debatable cannibalism. The result is a brood that acts with believable, albeit reckless, abandon, comprised of characters equally likeable and abhorrent, enviable and pitiable.

The real payoff in this production, though, is its willingness to reinvent the wheel, not merely for the sake of doing so (hello, Anne Rice!), but as a means of bringing concrete



Near Dark: A bold wave of new blood circa 1987.



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reality to a mythological creature. *Near Dark's* vampires never call themselves such - in fact, the "V" word isn't uttered once in this movie, by anyone. They have regular teeth, not fancy incisors. They are outcasts in the truest sense of the word, barely able to earnestly converse as a result of spending far, far too much time trapped in each other's company. They travel by day only when necessary - essentially, like confronted animals - and only then in cloaks, aviator goggles and, one of the film's many beautiful touches, vehicles with blacked-out windows (talk about batmobiles!). Their killing routines have evolved into by-the-numbers, recurring, grotesque skits.

There are, of course, weaknesses (hey, it's a cult classic, isn't it?). Sunrise, the Achilles' Heel of the vampire set, rears its ugly head just a few times too many at absolutely critical moments. It's sadly disappointing to see this beyond-dead group get caught with its pants down on a regular basis, more so considering that their leader purportedly fought in the Civil War. (Then again, Jesse does point out that his side lost.)

And the closing arc with the pack's inevitable disintegration is a dud, specifically because it tries too hard to be a showstopper. Possibly this has something to do with the fact that director Kathryn Bigelow was on the eve of



becoming, briefly, Mrs. James Cameron. (Five hacks says Jimmy got her the sacrificial eighteen wheeler.) Regardless, *Near Dark* becomes a near miss because of this.

Anchor Bay's new 2 DVD edition gives *Near Dark* a widescreen presentation with a digitally mastered, THX soundtrack. The movie's rich atmosphere comes to the forefront in every sequence, chiaroscuro imagery has rarely been deployed as effectively in a full-colour environment as it is here by Bigelow, making ostensibly her directing debut. Extras include a superb retrospective with contributions from Bigelow, Paxton and Lance Henriksen (the latter of whose fingernail story alone is worth the price of admission), plus a fairly rote, "everyone was so great" commentary track from Bigelow.

As well, standard trailer and posters/still gallery options show exactly why *Near Dark* lost the war with *The Lost Boys* during their unfortunate release overlap. "Sleep all day, party all night, never grow old, never die - it's fun to be a vampire." That's catchy all right; memorable, even. Alas, that tagline belongs to *The Lost Boys*. By comparison, *Near Dark's* already ho-hum warning to "Pray for daylight" becomes downright sleep-inducing. But even if *Near Dark's* theatrical backer, De Laurentis Entertainment, left its baby out in the sun without any block, kudos go - as always - to Anchor Bay for unearthing this landmark vampire movie and giving it the deluxe treatment and marketing that it deserves.

Gary Butler

THE DEAD DON'T DROWN

SHOCK WAVES DVD 1977

Starring Brooke Adams, John Carradine and Peter Cushing

Directed by Ken Wiederhorn

Written by John Harrison and Ken Wiederhorn
Blue Underground

First, let's get the totally obvious part out of the way: IF YOU SEE ONLY ONE UNDERWATER NAZI ZOMBIE MOVIE

THIS YEAR... etc. There, I've said it. Of course, no one with even a passing fondness for seventies drive-in fodder could be unfamiliar with *Shock Waves*, but I'm also aware that some of our readers were born more recently than, say, the last time Alice Cooper made a good album. (If you'd like to know when that was, contact *Rue Morgue* and we'll give you Aaron Lupton's e-mail address.)

It is for the edification of this particular demographic that I now provide the one sentence version: in *Shock Waves*, the crew and passengers of a small tourist boat wind up stranded on a Caribbean island inhabited by former SS officer Peter Cushing and a platoon of undead Nazi commandos. This plot description might put one in mind of *Gilligan's Island* as directed by George Romero, but *Shock Waves* is actually quite a departure from the zombie film archetype.

To begin with, these mouldy minions of the Wehrmacht aren't cannibalistic, opting instead to simply snuff their prey and go hunting for more without stopping to snack. Maybe this was writer/director Ken Wiederhorn acknowledging the Third Reich's obsession with efficiency, or maybe he just didn't know the correct German phrase for "more brains".

Regardless, this deviation from standard zombie protocol means that *Shock Waves* is considerably less gory than its peers. Water becomes death personified here as every murder takes place in the ocean, fresh water or, in one particularly novel incident, a fish tank. While Wiederhorn would go on to make more low-budget horror films - including *Eyes of a Stranger* and *Return of the Living Dead Part II* - he openly admits that he's not a horror fan. "It took me a long time to figure out that I was not really suited to making horror movies - I didn't have any feeling for them," he states on the commentary track, and I'm afraid I have to agree. It's not that *Shock Waves* is a bad film per se, but damn it all, underwater Nazi zombies could have been sooooo much scarier!

Extras in this reissue include a highly



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Brotherhood of Satan: Proof that Satan is a geezer.

entertaining commentary track featuring Wiederhorn, Fred Olen Ray (who worked as a still photographer on *Shock Waves* prior to becoming a prolific B-movie director) and makeup artist Alan Ormsby (who would later co-write and star in *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*). There's also an interview segment with actor Luke Halpin, trailers and an extensive gallery of posters and production stills.

As for remastering, improvements in picture and sound quality are negligible, although that's understandable since the original negative disappeared a few years after the film's initial theatrical release. Despite its faults, fans of independent seventies horror could spend their hard-earned on much worse films than *Shock Waves*. It's worth noting, however, that the all-time best underwater Nazi zombie tale wasn't actually a film but a novel: Robert R. McCammon's pulp gem *The Night Boat*.

John W. Bowen

SATAN IS A GEEZER

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SATAN DVD 1971

Starring Strother Martin and L.Q. Jones

Directed by Bernard McEveety

Written by William Welch

Columbia TriStar

Movies so bad they're good. It's not a category you'll find at Blockbuster, but we here at *Rue Morgue* are quite familiar with this cinematic sub-genre. *The Brotherhood of Satan* cannot be recommended to those

looking for coherence, profundity or competence, but for aficionados of enthusiastic overacting, Satanism and small-town paranoia... welcome.

Veteran actor L.Q. Jones co-produced this mess and stars as the sheriff of a tiny Californian town desperate to save its vanishing children. Into this desperate situation come Ben (Charles Bateman), his girlfriend Nicky (Capel) and his daughter KT (Geri Renschl). Discovering a car full of dead bodies on the town's outskirts, the family seeks help from the locals, who promptly attack them for no seeming reason. Convinced that the town has gone mad, they flee, only to ditch the car after swerving to avoid hitting a young girl who – wait for it – isn't really there.

I could go on, but I really have to use the washroom. Long, wandering plotline short, the local children are being taken by the Brotherhood of Satan, a cabal of senior citizens who have lived for countless generations by transferring their souls into the bodies of mesmerized youngsters. When KT goes missing, Ben leads the search, ending up at the old house on the edge of town, which just happens to be the Satanists' lair.

The film's highlights are undoubtedly those scenes depicting the devil worshippers' preparations for the coming ceremony, including the casting out and murder of Dame Alice (Heleene Winston) for baptizing her child ("Satan's child!" the head witch reminds her). Rejected by her master, Alice is beaten to death by her fellow cultists, and let me tell you, there's nothing more dis-

turbing than a pack of snarling murderous seniors. The tone here is very *Rosmary's Baby*, although Satan's humor is perhaps a little less intentional, indeed, the dialogue here is as purple as the head witch's robes. If you don't mind atmosphere that vacillates between creepy and campy, *The Brotherhood of Satan* makes a perfect overcast Sunday time-killer.

Sean Plummer

AIN'T NO BABY FORMULA

THAT LITTLE MONSTER DVD 1994

Starring Melissa Baum, Reggie Bannister

and Andi Werning

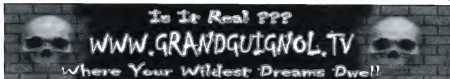
Written and directed by Paul Bunnell

Elite Entertainment

Have you ever stuffed your face with junk food to the point of feeling so bloated that you think you're going to be sick, but you just can't stop because it tastes so good? I have. And sitting through *That Little Monster* conjured up that very sensation all over again. Much of this film borders on the self-conscious and jaw-grinding territory usually reserved for student films. Yet I couldn't turn it off. And I'm glad I didn't, because the payoff – the end go down like a Coke chaser after three bags of Doritos.

Writer/director Paul Bunnell's script is simple: Jamie (Baum), a foreign exchange student, takes on a new babysitting gig in the strange home of strange parents (Werning and Mills) who – you guessed it – have a strange baby. But from there it blasts off into a *Twilight Zone* episode not suitable for television: The baby is a complete monster (literally), and over the course of the evening, manages to terrorize Jamie to a climax that delivers a most satisfying twist. It's always exciting to see a film that, like this one, manages to overstep its often amateurish production values, leaving you instead with its provocative imagery and imaginative concept branded inside your head.

As an added bonus, sometimes the acting



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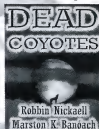
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Nightmare City: Oatmeal-faced zombies fight like ninjas.

and dialogue are actually good. And there are three noteworthy cameos: *Phantasma's* Reggie Bannister in a completely useless role, fan fave Forrest J Ackerman in a riff off the 1931 *Frankenstein* on-camera disclaimer, and... well, the third cameo should be a surprise.

The movie is only an hour long, but the DVD includes Bunnell's 1981 short horror film, *The Vintner*, which, unfortunately, failed to brand itself in my head.

Also included is a ten-minute interview with the director, obviously lifted from a segment of a community cable talk show. In it, Bunnell comes across as the kind of fella

you pray will not be seated next to you on a long flight to Australia. I suggest you don't watch it until after seeing the movie or all credibility could be lost. In all fairness to Bunnell, however, the DVD's commentary track (by Bunnell and producer/editor Carl Mastrocinque) is packed with groovy how'd-they-do-thats, and Bunnell keeps a lid on the ohnoxiousness throughout.

In the end, *That Little Monster*—with all the guts of a cult favorite—qualifies as an experience worth having. Completed in 1994 after three years of shooting, it's earned

its home on DVD. And I suggest you do. On a full stomach.

David Dupont

KUNG FU ZOMBIES TAKE ROME

NIGHTMARE CITY DVD 1980

Starring Mel Ferrer, Hugo Sgilliz and Laura Trotter
Directed by Umberto Lenzi
Written by Antonio Cesare Corti,
Luis Maria Delgado and Piero Regnoli
Anchor Bay Entertainment

Director Umberto Lenzi is a veteran of Italian horror cinema, and is remembered as one of the country's most imaginative cult directors. In 1973, Lenzi essentially gave birth to the Italian cannibal genre with *Man From Deep River* (*Fuore del sesso selvaggio*), and then attempted to out-excess his horror film contemporaries with 1980's *Eaten Alive* (*Mangiati vivi*) and 1981's *Make Them Die Slowly* (a.k.a. *Cannibal Ferox*). Sandwiched between these two films was the extremely cheesy pseudo-environmentalist zombie film *Nightmare City*.

If you're having trouble remembering this one, you might be thinking of its US release title, *City of the Walking Dead*, or alternatively, "that Italian horror movie where the zombies have oatmeal on their faces and fight like ninjas." Up until now, most of you

spaghetti splatter fans have probably seen this bizarre zombie film in its heavily cut US version. Now you can thank Anchor Bay for delivering the groceries with the original gore intact, although it should be said that even uncut, *Nightmare City* is not particularly bloody by the standards of Italian horror generally and Umberto Lenzi horror films in particular.

Nightmare City is often remembered for being overtly environmentalist (the shambling dead rise out of toxic waste), but the film is also remembered for the uniqueness of its zombies, who don't lumber mindlessly in search of human meat, but rather run, jump, fight, and use guns in their mindless quest to destroy the human race.

Of course, the athleticism of Lenzi's zombies does add a sliver of credibility to a



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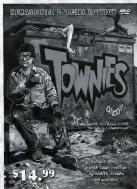
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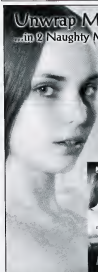
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976-EVIL: Not as good as you remember it.

genre in which humans are always somehow overcome by monsters moving at the pace of a tree sloth. On the other hand, *Nightmare City* loses covered ground with utterly ridiculous zombies (the aforementioned oatmeal faces), cheesy dialogue and an utterly implausible script. In one particularly riveting scene, the two heroes are running from their enemies, then they come across an abandoned restaurant and decide to sit down and have a coffee. Funny enough, it is precisely these qualities that made *Nightmare City* a pretty enjoyable film – the inherent cheesiness of the premise is classic B-movie fodder.

Anchor Bay's DVD release comes with a thirteen-minute interview with Lenzi titled *Tales of the Contaminated City*. Lenzi offers plenty of insight into his film, explaining that he feels it still communicates a serious environmentalist message. He also takes a shot at leading man Hugo Stiglitz when he says that he had to use him, thanks to pressure from the "higher-ups." Lenzi says he would have liked to have seen Franco Nero or John Saxon in his place and we can't help but agree.

Also included on the DVD is the obligatory trailer, an Umberto Lenzi bio, and an ultra-crisp widescreen 2.35:1 transfer.

Aaron Lupton

HANG UP, PLEASE

976-EVIL DVD 1986

Starring Stephen Geoffreys, Jim Metzler and Sandy Dennis

Directed by Robert Englund

Written by Rhett Topham & Brian Helgeland
Columbia TriStar

Time, harsh mistress that she is, has not been kind to 976-EVIL. Where the passage of years often bathes fright flicks in the warm glow of nostalgia ("Gee, I haven't seen *Piranha 2: The Spawning* since I was a kid. Wasn't that a great flick?"), Robert Englund's sole big-screen directorial effort deserves no such veneration. Which is probably why Columbia TriStar has given the film such a bare-bones release: a full-screen presentation augmented by some trailers. In fact, if 976-EVIL is remembered at all, it's for being directed by Englund (Freddie Krueger to you and me) and being one of *LA Confidential* scribe Brian Helgeland's first produced screenplays.

The film's gimmick – callers to 976-EVIL pay for their "horoscope" with their souls – is lame, and Englund's execution does little to spice it up. The annoying Stephen Geoffreys plays the annoying Hoax, a small-town disrag put upon by his religious kook mother (slumming Oscar winner Sandy Dennis),

leather-jacketed bullies, and even his Fonzie-like cousin Spike (Patrick O'Bryan). Spurned by Suzie (Lezlie Deane), Spike's trailer-trash girlfriend, Hoax calls – you guessed it – 976-EVIL and suddenly finds himself imbued with supernatural powers. The price, of course, is his gradual possession by the forces of eeeeeevil.

What works? Well, Geoffreys' relentlessly feminine manner plays well to his character's loser status (I was a high-school nerd myself, and even I want to beat him up) and the pronounced homoeroticism which underlies Hoax's hero worship of Spike, but he ain't scary. (An interesting aside: Geoffreys, under the pseudonym Sam Ritter, went on to become a gay porn star in titles like

Latin Crotch Rockets and *Latin Halfway House Hunks*.)

What doesn't work? How about standard-issue gore, '80s hairdos, the "High School Confidential" power dynamics, and groaner-style humour. Consider 976-EVIL a horror history footnote, a curiosity strictly for the curious. And, no, it's not as good as you remember it.

Sean Plummer



THE DEVIL MADE HER DO IT

THE ANTICHRIST DVD 1974

Starring Carla Gravina, Mel Ferrer and Arthur Kennedy

Directed by Alberto De Martino

Written by Gianfranco Cienci, Alberto De Martino and Vincenzo Mannio
Anchor Bay Entertainment

After the success of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* in 1973, the inevitable truckload of rip-offs arrived on the scene, mostly hailing from overseas. Italian director Alberto De Martino scrounged up *The Antichrist*, a movie that came to be known as the best of the *Exorcist* rip-offs. However dubious that claim might be, I am inclined to agree after viewing De Martino's film for the first time – the movie is about as original as *Sam 41*, but it certainly is a marvelously repulsive showcase of blasphemy.

Writers Clerici, Martino and Mannio (the very minds behind such films as *Don't Torture a Duckling*, *Cannibal Holocaust* and



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The Antichrist: The best of the Exorcist rip-offs.

Howe at the Edge of the Park) were clearly drawing from the works of Freud in developing their portrait of a psychologically disturbed woman. After suffering through a traumatic experience in her youth, Ippolita is left paralyzed. She also holds some seriously Oedipal yearnings for her father. In an attempt to cure Ippolita from her paralysis, a psychiatrist attempts to discover what really happened to her when she was young. Unfortunately, the psychiatrist ends up delving a little too far into Ippolita's psychosis, all the way back to her former life as a woman who was burned at the stake for blasphemy. Too late, Ippolita's "bad part" is awoken and, as they say, all hell breaks loose.

Anchor Bay presents *The Antichrist* in 1.85:1 widescreen, which highlights the red-blue contrast so heavily predominant in the film. Also predominant is the score by the great Ennio Morricone, whose very disturbing violins are presented in simple Dolby Digital 2.0. The chief extra here is a ten-minute interview with De Martino and Morricone. The director does his best to convince the audience that his movie is not a complete rip-off of *The Exorcist*, but it's a tough job considering the head spinning,

projectile vomiting and cursing that would make Tony Montana blush.

Come to think of it, though, De Martino's film is not a total scam of *The Exorcist*; there's a nice helping of *Rosemary's Baby* in here as well (Ippolita's hair style even resembles Mia Farrow's towards the end). Included is a TV spot and a poster gallery.

The Antichrist may annoy some of you for its blatant attempts to cash in on a superior horror film, but it can still be enjoyed by those with a taste for the extreme. De Martino injects authentic theological substance to the picture, giving Ippolita's blasphemous concoctions greater shock effect ("why don't you dip your bud into my holy water and baptize me!" she screams at her uncle, a Catholic priest.).

Props go out to Anchor Bay for creating another special edition out of an otherwise impossible to find, heavily-cut video.

Aaron Lupton

DEMI MOORE'S PROUDEST MOMENT

PARASITE DVD 1502

Starring Robert Gaudin, Demi Moore

and Luca Bercovi

Directed by Charles Band

Written by Alan Adler, Michael Shoob

and Frank Levering

Anchor Bay Entertainment

Billed in '82 as "the first futuristic monster movie in 3-D," *Parasite* has all the makings of a full-fledged cult film. Not only was it directed by Mr. Full Moon himself, Charles Band, it also marks the acting debut of one Demi Moore along with Runaways' singer Cherie Currie. As if that weren't enough, the flick also features the special effects of Stan (Athena) Winston, and it's about a giant parasite that lives in a man's

stomach.

Parasite is a film that clearly tried to live off its 3-D gimmick, as did entries in the *Amityville*, *Friday the 13th* and *Jaws* franchises during the same period (1982-83). Considering that the effect cannot yet be

reproduced on DVD, one might wonder whether any of these films are even worth the time. As it turns out, *Parasite* is a pretty well-made B-movie, gimmicks aside.

The film opens on a futuristic world gone mad, where the corporations have turned into ruthless gangsters called "The Merchants" who charge \$40 per gallon for gas. We close in on Dr. Paul Dean, a scientist who roams the barren countryside searching for a biological cure for the parasite living in his stomach. With the help of a young orphan (Moore, whose acting skills and mannerisms have since expanded), Dean finds himself in the situation where he must locate the other parasite before they can reproduce, all the while fending off a Merchant representative as well as the local gang of city exiles.

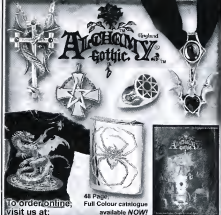
So, okay, the plot and acting in *Parasite* are pretty mundane, but there is something really endearing about this movie. Robert Gaudin (*The Alchemist*, *Cutting Class*) does a good job as the average-Joe-cum-action-hero, the special effects are hilarious (the titular bug looks like a veal cutlet with broken glass stuck to it), and the dialogue is mind-numbingly dumb. And even though *Parasite* concentrates solely on wooing the audience with shameless 3-D gimmicking, it manages to be more genuinely entertaining than anything else Chuck Band went on to do (*Trancers*, anyone?).

Unfortunately, if you already own the Full Moon DVD release of this movie, there won't be much need to get too excited over Anchor Bay's updated version. Full Moon's was in full frame and Anchor Bay has transferred it to the theatrical presentation of 2.00.1, but the difference is negligible. The movie still looks fuzzy and the picture quality is poor. Even worse, Anchor Bay has taken out all the extras save a trailer, while Full Moon's version offers stills, extra trailers, and actor filmographies — admittedly unsubstantial in their own right.

All things told, this one's for B-movie fans and cult cinema nerds only. In other words, if you can dig stuff like *Funeral* or *Final Exam*, by all means knock yourself out with this classically bad piece of schlock.

Aaron Lupton





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WEREWOLF SHADOW DVD 1971

Starring Paul Naschy, Gaby Fuchs and Barbara Capell
Directed by Leon Klimovsky
Written by Jacinto Molina and Hans Munkel
Anchor Bay Entertainment

"The blood flows like vintage wine!" indeed, in this entry into Paul Naschy's enduring Waldemar Daninsky werewolf saga. *Werewolf Shadow* (*La noche de Walpurgis*) opens up on a shot of two doctors removing the silver bullets from Daninsky's chest. Once the operation is over and the full moon begins to rise, he transforms into a bloodthirsty werewolf, killing the doctors and running off into the night. Fangs dripping, the werewolf happens upon a young woman in the woods and rips her throat out, blood oozing over her exposed breasts as the opening credits roll... Yeah baby!

Following the opening sequence, we are introduced to Elvira (Fuchs), who is working an essay documenting the 11th century crimes of the Countess Wandessa d'Arville de Nadassy, rumored to have drunk the blood of young virgins to preserve her beauty. She convinces her friend, Genevieve, to join her in the hunt for the Countess' tomb, but the ladies run out of gas on a lonely road in the mountains and would be stranded but for the appearance of the suave Daninsky. Naturally, the two girls accept his invitation to stay at his mansion for a few days.

Later, the three of them discover the Countess' tomb and, ignoring the warning that "No one must disturb her rest until the day of the last judgement," pry it open and remove the silver dagger protruding from her chest. As if that's not enough, Genevieve then cuts her hand and drips blood into the mouth of the skeleton. Is the Countess resurrected? Is this a horror movie?

Elvira and Daninsky, now in love, seek to destroy the two vampires... with the werewolf also seeking release from his cursed existence at the hands of his true love.

While not the best entry in the long-running Daninsky saga, this film has some wonderfully atmospheric moments, especially the prowling vampire women, who move in surreal slow motion. Naschy remade this film in 1980 as the much more satisfying *The Crawling* (*El retorno del hombre-lobo*).

Madacy Entertainment released a battered full-frame print of the US cut *Werewolf vs. The Vampire Woman* as part of their Killer Creature Double Feature line a while back, but Anchor Bay's update is by far the more satisfying release. They've presented it in an excellent 1.85:1 widescreen print that restores snippets of gore and nudity missing from the US print and several segments that did not appear in any English language print. These portions appear in Spanish with subtitles. There is some slight print damage evident, but overall it's a very satisfying transfer.

Included with the standard theatrical trailer, talent bio and poster gallery is a fifteen-minute interview segment with Naschy in which he claims to have suggested the slow-motion effect to director Klimovsky. Amanda de Ossorio later adapted this for his *Blind Dead* films, to which Peter Jackson pays homage with his Ring-wraiths in the recent *Lord of the Rings*.

CURSE OF THE DEVIL DVD 1973

Starring Paul Naschy, Fabiola Falcon and Vidal Molina
Directed by Carlos Aured
Written by Jacinto Molina
Anchor Bay Entertainment

With *Curse of the Devil* (*El retorno de Walpurgis*), Naschy abandons the continuity of the previous films to start a sort of Waldemar Daninsky-

in-time series. Here, a medieval Daninsky slaughters a Satanic coven of witches, but the leader of the coven curses his line as she burns at the stake. Hundreds of years later, another Daninsky hunts down and kills a wolf, only to discover the body of a young gypsy boy. The boy's grieving family, descendants of the witch, place a second lycanthropic curse on Daninsky after the boy's sister seduces him and scores his chest with the skull of a wolf.

Enter a pair of attractive sisters. Daninsky falls in love with one, while the other seduces him and dies at his hand when the full moon rises. Only the true love of the other sister can release him from the gypsy curse.

Gemstone Entertainment released a budget VHS version of *Curse of the Devil* (see *RHM18*), but it goes without saying that this DVD renders the videotape superfluous. This print features the same slightly washed-out opening sequence that the VHS did, but after this the print quality improves substantially. As this disc was mastered from the original vault elements, this is no doubt a result of the film stock used and not because of any mastering problems. Unlike the VHS, the entire film is presented in the original 1.85:1 aspect ratio, anamorphically enhanced. Like *Werewolf Shadow*, the DVD restores bits cut out for North American release, and includes two never-before-seen sex sequences. The extras include the same interview, talent bio and poster gallery included with *Werewolf Shadow*.

Hardcore Naschy-philes will rejoice over the release of these two discs, and fans curious about Naschy's rather extensive body of work are well-advised to check out *Curse of the Devil* to see what all the fuss is about.



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Classic Tales from Television's King of Horror

The Dan Curtis Macabre Collection

MPI Home Video

He brought us *Dark Shadows*, *The Night Strangler*, *Trilogy of Terror* and *Burnt Offerings*, and once upon a time, he also held the crown as Television's King of Horror. He is Dan Curtis, a man who made movies that were good and novices that weren't so hot, but whatever he made, he could never be faulted for his unwavering love of the genre, exemplified in over three decades of bringing spooky tales to living rooms across North America.

You'll find some of his lesser known works (along with two movies he produced) on *Macabre Collection*, recently put out by MPI Home Video. The four DVD set brings together four classic horror adapts, including *Dracula*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

Curtis directed *Dracula* for television back in '73 which starred Jack Palance in the role of the Count working from a script penned by Richard Matheson. I always remembered this version as being particularly fierce in its presentation of the Count, and Palance indeed plays him less debonair and more in the vein of the rat-like Orlock from Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Keeping in mind that this was budgeted for television circa early seventies, Curtis' retelling ages remarkably well, largely due to Palance's imposing physical presence and Slavic facial features.

The DVD features a short interview with Palance, in which he recounts that *Dracula* was the only character he ever played that genuinely frightened him. He also reveals that he has never actually seen the finished movie and closes with the cryptic statement that "maybe one day I'll have the courage to see how mean I was."

An interview with Curtis follows, in which the director dis-

cusses how he "ripped himself off" when he took the love story from *Dark Shadows* and worked it into his *Dracula*. He also has big words for Palance, whom he calls "the most frightening *Dracula* to ever put on that cape." With apologies to Max Schreck, we think he actually may have a point.

Curtis had used Palance before, back in 1968 for *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which was shot in England by director Charles Jarrott and produced by Curtis. The film was nominated for six Emmy Awards, largely on the strength of a taut script and great performances. The production values are unusually thin and the whole thing looks like it was shot on vid, but *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* still flies like the best low-budget British television movies, which it resembles closely.

For *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1973), Curtis brought in director Glenn Jordan, with whom he had previously worked with on *Frankenstein*. Again, bottom-rung production values belie strong performances, especially from Shane Briant in the role of Dorian, the young aristocrat whose portrait takes on the outward characteristics of his descent into decadence. A faithful – and requisitely dark – rendition of Wilde's classic tale.

In 1974, Curtis took on Henry James' popular ghost story *The Turn of the Screw* for television, and brought in a young Lynn Redgrave for the role of the governess (Michael Redgrave's father, had previously played in *The Innocents*). Curtis shot entirely on location outside of London, England and played the story as a gothic romance that stays faithful (mostly) to James' work. Quite creepy despite its, yet again, substandard production values. The disc is rounded out by interviews with Redgrave and Curtis.

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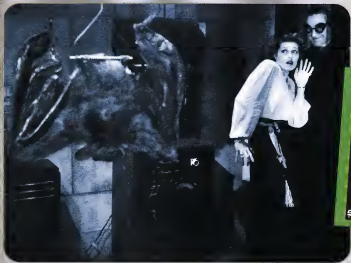
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The Official Lugosi

THE ESTATE OF BELA LUGOSI RESURRECTS THE LATE STAR ON DVD

BY NATHAN TYLER



Bela Lugosi gets diabolical in a classic scene from *The Devil Bat*.

If there was ever an enigma in horror cinema, it was Bela Lugosi. It seems that for every haunting, brilliant performance in the legendary thespian's career, such as his portrayal as the ultimate vamp in Tod Browning's *Dracula* or the zombie master *Murder Legendre* in Victor Halperin's *White Zombie*, there's a scattershot, nearly laughable turn like *The Vampire* in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space* or the omniscient, God-like narrator ("Pull the string!") in *Glen Or Glenda*. It's not surprising, then, that for the loads of ink that has been dropped on Lugosi in books and articles throughout the years, many scribes have chosen to heartily focus on the negative aspects of his life and career—he was a helpless morphine addict in the years leading up to his death—almost to the discredit of all that was positive about the man.

"Well, you're going to write something positive!" exclaims a stern-voiced Bela Lugosi, Jr. from his California law office in an exclusive

chat with *Rue Morgue*. He ain't joking around either. Lugosi, Jr. is an entertainment lawyer who has rallied against Hollywood for the rights to his father's pictures for years. He's also the founder/owner of Lugosi Enterprises, a new-fangled company dedicated to preserving the memory of Bela Lugosi by releasing the definitive editions of his classic films on DVD. The project is clearly a labour of love for Lugosi, Jr., a testament to the loving memory of his father.

"He was self-educated, articulate, well-read. He was a man of high character, and intelligent. He liked the finer things in life. He was well-traveled, and very interested in his family," he says of Bela, Sr. with no small measure of pride. "[The negative aspects were] just a small segment of his life. People dwell on the later, later years. Don't forget, he was 49-years-old when he made *Dracula* in 1931. So he had a pretty full life up until that point. He traveled to quite a few countries, was a celebrated actor in all the coun-

tries he was in, both in film and on stage, and all the classical parts. And once he did *Dracula* so well in the film, he was typecast as a boogeyman.

"What Lugosi Enterprises is doing is protecting and marketing the rights to my dad and his likeness," he continues, "and creatively we were trying to think of what are the various projects that would be good. And I've always wanted to keep his memory alive by releasing a nice collection of his pictures, because we've seen so many junk versions that are copied off of television and cut-up and all that business. So I wanted to do it right."

And so it might be said, with the label's first two titles for release, *Bowery at Midnight* and *The Devil Bat*, a couple of grand Lugosi frightfests from the 1940s. Both discs feature digitally remastered 35mm prints, in-depth commentaries with Lugosi, Jr. and film historian Ted Newsom, rare photo and poster galleries and



"They're all classic films," says Lugosi Jr. (*The Bowery at Midnight* pictured above)

theatrical trailers, not to mention ultra-rare radio dramas (*The Dr. Prescribed Death and Gasoline Cocktail*) starring the famed actor.

"We're trying to make the discs as high quality as any major studio puts out," he notes. "We have additional material put in there they wouldn't have."

Like any venture of this magnitude, of course, the project didn't happen overnight. In fact, its seeds were sown many years ago, when Lugosi, Jr. was still a law student in LA. He had begun to notice that Universal Studios was liberally marketing and licensing merchandise, and were licensing others to market merchandise, using the name and likeness of Bela Lugosi. True to his persistent nature, he took action.

"I brought a lawsuit against Universal," he states matter-of-factly, "which didn't become final until 1979 in a California supreme court. Universal was successful. I was successful at the trial court, but it got reversed on appeal. The court went on saying that the rights of a name and likeness of a deceased celebrity for advertising and merchandising purposes did not survive the death of the personality unless he had exploited those rights during his lifetime. And there was no evidence that my father did."

Soon after that disappointment, Lugosi, Jr. dusted himself off, kept on plugging, and never lost sight of his goal. His legal hustling paid off.

"Thereafter, I did have some participation in a legislative campaign against California to

change the law and reverse that decision. In fact, in the late 1980s, California passed Civil Code Section 990 – the Celebrity Rights Act – which reversed the Lugosi vs. Universal decision."

While *The Bowery at Midnight* and *The Devil Bat* discs have just hit the shelves and should be enough to tide Lugosi fans over during the approaching winter months, Lugosi, Jr. has no plans of resting on his laurels for one second. He's currently hard at work prepping the existing titles in his collection while looking toward securing the rights to a bundle of classics for future DVD release.

"I don't have a whole collection done yet; I've got two done, I've got a couple more in the works, and every six months to a year there'll be a couple more," he explains. "They're all classic films. And part of the collection, hopefully, will be those films still under copyright that haven't been released on DVD for the home vid market. So I just want to get these first two out so I can make a deal to add the films that are just sitting in their vault and not being used in the collection. But right now we've got like forty or fifty public domain films, so I have plenty to do with that."

Somewhere out there in Hollywood Heaven, Bela Lugosi is surely watching. And smiling.

For more about Lugosi Enterprises, check out www.lugosi.com. ☼

Lugosi A GO-GO

HOLLYWOOD'S DRACULA DVD

Narrated by Robert Clarke and
Rue McClanahan
Written and directed by Gary D. Rhodes
Spinning Our Wheels Productions

Just in time to complement the wave of Lugosi classics being released on DVD is *Lugosi: Hollywood's Dracula*, a feature-length documentary on the life and screams of Bela Lugosi. Directed by Lugosi historian Gary D. Rhodes, the doc digs deep, chronicling the world-renowned actor's life from his early days as a stage actor in Hungary, his participation in the Communist regime after WWII, his numerous marriages and love affairs, all the way up to and after his crowning as a prince of horror following his donning of the black cape in Tod Browning's *Dracula*. More importantly, we are given some insight into Lugosi the man through interviews with friends and industry insiders such as producers Howard D. Koch and Richard Gordon, actors Sammy Petrillo and Audrey Totter, and directors Robert Wise and David Dunsen.

While *Lugosi: Hollywood's Dracula* is a solid, serviceable documentary on the late star, it's also a fairly standard, by-the-numbers deal. Sure, it's exceptionally well-researched, informative and educational, but it lacks the life, passion and "bite" of, say, a *Divine Trash* (Steve Yeager's vibrant documentary on the life and films of John Waters).

Simply put, the film doesn't take any risks – it takes on the style and form of a typical A&E Biography, and while it doesn't shy from going into some of the not-so-cheerful aspects of the thespian's life toward the end (like his crumbling home life, drug addiction and his days with a young go-guiter by the name of Ed Wood), it's mostly a very happy and very safe portrait, focusing mainly on the highlights of Lugosi's career.

Lugosi: Hollywood's Dracula is an ideal place to start for students of cinema looking to learn about Hollywood's late great star. Hardcore fans in search of something new, however, will want to seek out deeper bites.

Nathan Tylor



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FOREWORD BY WRITER/DIRECTOR KEVIN SMITH



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Why Psychos Stay Indoors

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THE AFFIC DVD 1980

Starring Carrie Snodgrass, Ray Milland
Directed by George Edwards
Written by George Edwards and Tony Crechales

CRAWLSPACE DVD 1986

Starring Klaus Kinski, Talia Balsam
Written and directed by David Schmoeller
MGM Midnight Movies

Good and evil, right and wrong, heaven and hell, *The Affic* and *Crawlspace* MGM sets out to prove the old adage "you can't have one without the other" with yet another installment in their otherwise stellar Midnight Movies Double Feature DVD series. Side one is an effectively sleazy psycho thriller starring one of cinema's most dangerous eccentrics, the other is a steaming stack of monkey turd. Let the good times roll!

Those who know my tastes know that I can usually find something of worth in even the lowest form of film fungus. But God help me, *The Affic* sucks harder than a syphilis-lipped Parkside whore! Carrie Snodgrass wigs out as an aging, annoyingly demented spinster who is forced to care for her abusive, wheelchair-bound father (played flapjack flat by B-flick staple Ray Milland). Seems Carrie's fixated upon the "mysterious disappearance" of some schmo boyfriend twenty years prior and has retreated

into a near psychotic fantasy world ruled by her dastardly dad. She also has a thing for simians and eventually buys a chimp, keeping it as a pet. The whole lame-ass, pseudo-VC Andrews epic proks with the discovery of a dark secret in guess where? *The Affic*, baddd bing!

Milder than the worst slab of movie of the week gouda, *The Affic* boasts a pretty weird killer ape dream sequence, but is otherwise statically directed, horrendously scored and numbingly dull and features a big surprise "twist" ending that only a baboon wouldn't see coming. Bombs away!

Literally on the flipside of this crazy coin we have David (Puppelmeister) Schmoeller's energetic and inventive *Crawlspace*, starring the Grand Poobah of lunatic thespians Klaus Kinski (see *AMM29*). Basically an '80s revamp of Michael Powell's classic *Peeping Tom*, *Crawlspace* has Kinski chewing tongues and scenery as a sick fuck landlord of a chi-chi apartment complex that only rents to young, hot single white females. He whiles away his days stiffering through the ductwork, spying on, toying with and eventually (and bloodlessly) murdering the hapless honeys, all because his dad was

a Nazi. Or something. It's a psycheque performance to be sure, but nobody does nutbar better than Kinski.



Crawlspace is decent stalk and slash fare, with ultra-cool Pino Donnagio music, cracker jack direction, and a shortage of explicit shocks, but dollops of greasy sleaze. It's not quite the classic MGM thinks it is, but it's the only reason to buy this architecturally psychotic-themed collection. *The Affic* is cold brussel sprouts. *Crawlspace* is the T-bone steak. Bon appetit!

Chris Alexander



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VINTAGE HORROR REISSUES

CINEMARQUEE

KARLOFF GOES APE IN THE UK

HORROR CLASSICS 4

THE APE 1940

Starring Boris Karloff, Moris Wrixon and Gertrude Holliman
Directed by William Nigh
Written by Curt Siodmak

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE 1940

Starring Boris Karloff, Margaret Lindsey and Bruce Lester
Directed by Terry O. Morse
Written by Leo Katz
Roan Group Archival Entertainment

Ah yes, censorship. That glorious institution shared by all great nations and people around the world. And nowhere is censorship more cherished than in the horror entertainment industry. Censorship can make a small film seem huge, and for many of us genre fans, that's half the fun. But for those of you who think censorship has led to the watered-down, politically correct output of the past decade, you need only cast your eyes to a much earlier time, when what would pass in today's *Free Willy 2* could be quickly deemed unacceptable for viewers of all kinds.

During the late 1930s, horror films had fallen out of vogue as a result of social groups targeting them for their corruption of audiences and promotion of violence. As a result, Boris Karloff, famous for his monster film roles, found work in various comedies, dramas, and most often as detective Mr Wong in a series of mystery films. But the 1939 smash hit *Son of Frankenstein* helped put horror back in theatres, and by the



Bad Monkey! Boris Karloff kills for a good cause in The Ape.

next year Karloff was able to squeeze in a few of said genre films.

The *Ape*, 1940, was based somewhat on 1934's *House of Mystery* and the only horror film that Karloff did for financially challenged Monogram Pictures. Karloff adds a strong performance as the good doctor driven to do bad things when a young crippled girl is desperately in need of human spinal fluid — apparently a hot commodity. The fact that Karloff murders his victims in the hollowed out body of a gorilla adds irresistible camp value and harkens the viewer back to a genre now long passed — the killer gorilla movie!

Also filmed in 1940 was *British Intelligence*, directed by Terry Morse, famous for *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*. Here Karloff plays Valder, a half-crippled butler, who also doubles as a WWI spy. Whose side he is on is the key mystery at hand. *British Intelligence* later became famous for its blatant nationalism

and "veiled" comments about Hitler. It is often remarked that in watching *British Intelligence*, it is easy to forget that the events are supposed to take place during the First World War not the Second.

Of course if you are wondering how *British Intelligence* fits in to the Horror Classics title, you are not alone. Roan could have included *Black Friday*, *You'll Find Out*, or *Before I Hang* (all 1940 horror titles starring Boris Karloff), but for unknown reasons they went with this one. In all honesty, *British Intelligence* is the more intelligent and engaging of the two films, but collectors looking for a good way to get classic horror on DVD may be disappointed. Besides, there are no killer monkeys here.

Roan Group's DVD is relatively minimal, with trailers for both films as well as a screen or so of historical information. As is the norm with many black and white-era films, the digital transfer is not a significant improvement over what we would expect from VHS.

Aaron Lupton



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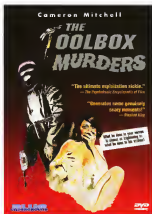
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Dinner's Ready! THE GORE MET

Slasher films may be derivative, cliché-ridden embarrassments to true horror fans, but with its new releases, Blue Underground reminds us that the roots of the genre are in gialli and exploitation films.



The Toolbox Murders 1978 DVD

Starring Cameron Mitchell, Pamela Lynn Ferdin, Wesley Eure
Directed by Dennis Donnelly
Written by Neva Frieden, Robert Easter and Ann Kingberg
Blue Underground

The Toolbox Murders is a controversial early landmark in the slasher genre, a cruel, exploitative film that has drawn almost universal derision amongst fans and critics alike. Released the same year as John Carpenter's *Halloween*, this film is perhaps as influential to the glut of slasher films that were to follow for its depiction of graphic gore. In fact, while it was inspired by the perpetual theatrical staying power of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), it is really more an updating of the groundbreaking *Blood Feast* (1963), both in aesthetic and tone.

Like *Blood Feast*, the film opens with a series of grisly murders, but with a gritty realism H.G. Lewis was never able to accomplish. A hulking ski-masked intruder utilizes the contents of a toolbox to wreak havoc on nubile young women living in a low-rise block of apartments in Los Angeles. "Wanton" women are drilled and blood-gassed in gory detail and, in one of the most notorious murder set pieces in slasher history, the lengthy bubble bath masturbation of pretty, nude Marianne Ward is totally interrupted with a nailgun!

The film then switches gears from glaucoesque stalk 'n' slash to almost wholesome family drama when Laurie (Ferdin), daughter of bedraggled bartender Jo Ann (Aneta Corsaut, *The Andy Griffith Show*) is kidnapped. Building superintendent Ben Kingsley (Mitchell) views Laurie as the reincarnation of the daughter he lost in a car accident, and keeps her tied to the bed in his daughter's bedroom, singing her hymns and questioning her chastity. Laurie's brother Joey gets too close to Ben's secret before the film erupts in a final climactic bloodbath.

Blue Underground debut an excellent, blemish-free widescreen print in the original 1.66:1 aspect ratio, slightly grainy, as is to be expected from a low-budget film nearly 25-years-old, but with strong colours and deep blacks. This is the definitive version of this over-looked trash classic. Included in the extras-packed disc is an interesting interview segment with Ward, better known as porn starlet Kelly Nichols, as well as a full-length commentary from Ferdin, producer Tony DiNo and director of photography Gary Graver.

THE PROWLER

1981 DVD

Starring Vicky Dawson, Christopher Goutman, Lawrence Tierney
Directed by Joseph Zito
Written by Neal F. Barbera and Glenn Leopold
Blue Underground

The Prowler is another important early slasher film. In retrospect, it may seem by-the-numbers, but this is one of the films that helped define the conventions of the genre. In a soon-to-be standard prologue, set in 1945, a Dear John letter from a young girl to her soldier boyfriend precipitates the ensuing mayhem. After she leaves a graduation party for a local college with her new boyfriend for a little moonlit lovin', the two are brutally impaled with a pitchfork by a silent maniac clad in full combat gear. The murder is unsolved. Thirty-five years later, the students of the college are preparing for the first graduation party since that fateful night. The unknown soldier returns, armed with pitchfork and bayonet, to continue the carnage.



While this is a competently directed, well-acted film with genuine moments of suspense, the main attraction of *The Prowler* is the unvarnished gore effects. Tom Savini literally came straight from the set of *Maniac* to work on this film. In a career highlight, one hapless male victim has a bayonet rammed through the top of his skull and out the bottom of his jaw, his eyes rolling back into their sockets as the killer works the bayonet in the wound. Savini repeats *Maniac*'s infamous exploding head sequence in the film's climax to great effect.

Blue Underground presents another flawless print in the original 1.85:1 theatrical aspect ratio. Among the extras is an entertaining commentary from Zito and Savini, who went on to work on *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter*, the best of the *F13* sequels. **B**



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the Ninth Circle

BOOKS

horror gets heady • bad movies are good • frank for fans



horror films of the 1970s

John Kenneth Muir
McFarland & Co.

With the dead horse of McCarthyism long buried and the hippie dream dead, the 1970s ushered in yet another golden era in American horror cinema. Indie filmmaker John Kenneth Muir tackles the dubious task of categorizing and reviewing over 200 of the most interesting, meaningful and bizarre films of the decade, situating them in their time and place and with attention to how they remain unique to the decade.

Heavily focused on (but not entirely confined to) American releases, Muir's *Horror Films of the 1970s* covers the usual territory (i.e. critical reception, cast/credit info) as well as detailed plot synopsis, personal commentary and subsequent legacy of each of the titles. But Muir also ventures well beyond the basics where it counts. His academic introduction is actually a pretty good read on its own and uses the art-imitates-life argument as a critical tool to determine how the disco decade spawned a plethora of new horror trends.

Thus Muir sees the political machinations of the Nixon era in *Jaws* and *The Exorcist*, and traces the birth of the blaxploitation genre to widening ethnic gaps.

Muir also credits Vietnam as a subtle catalyst for the sudden "new freedom" of seventies film, and the rise of "savage cinema" the likes of *Last House on the Left*, *Frenzy* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. And while it may seem trite to suggest that spiritual vulnerability was at the root of the religious horror boom exemplified by *The Exorcist*, *The Omen* and *The Sentinel*, Muir still digs a lot deeper than most film guides.

Not intended to be comprehensive, *Horror Films of the 1970s* still manages to sneak in lesser known trash crossover fare like *Werewolves on Wheels*, even while the dramatic horror of *Deliverance* and *A Clockwork Orange* are treated as vastly more valuable to the genre than "horror"-tagged crapfests like *Ruby*, *Gritzy* and *Track of the Moonbeast* combined.

Perhaps the coolest feature is Muir's extensive and humorous appendix section, in which he offers his Hall of Fame, best movies, memorable movie ad lines, recommended viewing and a list of horror film conventions, such as "Germ Films," "Rape and Revenge" and something he calls "He/She Can't Be Alive, Because I Killed Him/Her."

The tag's a bit pricey at upwards of \$65 US and the book could do with more pictures, but I didn't find any glaring oversights and

actually learned that Peter Cushing has been in more horror movies than any man in history. Good fun for casual fans and hardened intellectuals alike.

Tom Dracomer

**reel shame:
bad movies and the hollywood
stars who made them**
Christopher Holland and Scott Hamilton
Stamp Tokyo

Eight years ago, Florida-based film critics Christopher Holland and Scott Hamilton created stampky.com, a website dedicated to cult and B-movies, and their first book is a compendium of films that big stars make a point of leaving off their resumes. Not that Holland and Hamilton offer up a lot of startling revelations in *Reel Shame*; after all, it's fairly common knowledge that Hollywood übercouple Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt have *Leprechaun* and *Cutting Class* in their respective pasts. Post-James Bond, Sean Connery took a wrong turn and wound up in *Zardoz* sporting a ponytail and a red Speedo. Before *The Terminator*, *Aliens* or that big boat movie, James Cameron directed *Piranha 2*, which he still claims is the best movie ever made about flying piranhas. And it's reasonably well known that Kevin Costly -

The Grim Reader

BLOOD LINES: THE LITTLE BOOK OF VAMPIRES

Barbara Stewart
Arsenal Pulp Press

This "Little Book of Vampires" lives up to the name, measuring roughly 3" X 4" and clocking in at a neat 95 pages. What is it? A mini-compendium of memorable lines from a host of vamp myths, mainly from literature and film. Sharp. Emma Anderson



Glenn Strange (left) in the role of the Frankenstein monster, with Boris Karloff.

HAUNTED HERITAGE

Michael Normin & Beth Scott
Forge Books

This definitive collection of North American ghost stories proves the old adage that truth is scarier than fiction. Herein find tales of murder, madness and revenge, percolated through the startled memories of eyewitnesses who are always frightened. You will be, too.

Red Gaudin

LADIES' NIGHT

Jack Ketchum
Gauntlet Press

"In the war between men and women, the shooting has begun." If the line intrigues you and you don't blanch at the thought of sloughing through pools of blood, then *Ladies' Night* is your book. Ketchum penned this back in the mid-eighties, further evidence that words can kill... from a man who knows. Emma Anderson



SIEGE OF EDEN

J. Oak Hartsock
Universe Book

J. Oak Hartsock's debut novel *Siege of Eden* mines some familiar literary territory in its exploration of the timeless battle between the powers of good and evil as they manifest in the small Maine town of Eden, where a veteran FBI agent and a young writer find themselves in an unlikely alliance against demonic forces that are Biblical in scope. What Hartsock brings to the table is a masterful sense of contemporary urban edge, a fluid, graceful writing style, and admirable originality.

Michael Rowe



sorry, Costner — was a minor player in Troma's *Sizzle Beach USA* before starring in cinematic milestones like... uh... oh well, never mind.

Nonetheless, there's a lot to be said for having all the aforementioned stinkers — the infamous and the obscure alike — compiled in a single volume, especially when the authors know the territory as intimately as Holland and Hamilton do. Of course, the fact that these guys are funny as hell doesn't hurt either.

Even the most stellar acting careers had pretty humble beginnings, so it's not surprising that Nicholas Cage's closet is bursting at the seams with skeletons. But what's really astounding — and sometimes appalling — is the number of atrocious films that major stars somehow wound up in long after they were already established. It was with this in mind that I immediately looked up *Tentacles* before actually starting the book at the beginning. Yup, there it was, a not-so-fond look back at the dismal Italian *Jony* knock-off that inexplicably starred John Huston and Henry Fonda. More stems from the how-the-hell-did-this-happen files include Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher doing comedy sketches and song-and-dance numbers in the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, while their co-star Sir Alec Guinness would later scrape bottom in *Myra Bess* and *Raise the Titanic* (co-starring Jason Robards).

Real Shame's only downfall is that it could have been much more comprehensive with a mere ten or twenty extra pages; Christopher

Plummer and Donald Pleasance are only briefly mentioned (*Starcrash* and *Alone in the Dark* respectively) and Michael Caine goes completely unnoticed. Likewise, there's no mention of Jason Alexander (with hair?) and a pubescent Holly Hunter turning up in the flaccid *Friday the 13th* knock-off *The Burning*.

And it's quite beyond me how anyone could write a book about big stars in bad films without even a cursory survey of *Ishtar* and *Heaven's Gate*. I can only guess that this is all because maybe Holland and Hamilton — in true bad movie tradition — are plotting a sequel. Available from books@stomptokyo.com.

John W. Bowen

The Frankenstein Archive

Donald F. Glut
McFarland & Co.

Back in 1994, Peter Haining released the definitive *Frankenstein Omnibus*, a collection of scripts and stories (old and contemporary) that neatly mapped the development of the Frankenstein narrative over nearly two centuries. That book, a collection of primary texts dating back to 1837 and featuring the work of literary giants in and out of the genre, remains the first and last word on the subject, even if it didn't have so much as one essay between its covers. But reading Donald F. Glut's *The Frankenstein Archive* opened my eyes to how differently people can come at the whole Frankenstein thing.

continued on page 75

Shadow Maker: The Digital Art of David Ho
available from: Marginal Distribution
www.marginalbook.com



Ninth Circle Presents

The Lost Lovecraft Letters

New reprint casts light on the man behind the mythos by Mary-Beth Hollyer



The stories of Stephen King and Clive Barker, the films of Stewart Gordon and Roger Corman – H.P. Lovecraft's influence on modern horror is astounding and yet, in his time he was considered to be an obscure writer – an outsider – his dark genius known only to his literary peers and the young men who regularly devoured *Weird Tales*. People like fifteen-year-old Willis Conover, co-author of *Lovecraft at Last* and editor of the short-lived fanzine *Science-Fantasy Correspondent*.

In 1936 Conover was among the straight-laced, bespectacled fanatics who filled their empty hours collecting, reading and writing to weird fiction magazines. So enthralled was he with the horror and sci-fi stories he read, that he took it upon himself to launch a fanzine in the truest sense, devoted to fans such as himself.

To get the presses rolling, the teenage editor sent letters to his favourite authors. At first posing as an adult, he requested material for his new publication ("we shall not be able to pay contributors, at present, in the form of money") and offered a free subscription in return.

To his delight, one of the many serious

replies he received came from Providence, Rhode Island, with H.P. Lovecraft's name in the return address! ("Say the name aloud, slowly, and feel its strength. Boom Boom Boom-boom. H. P. Lovecraft.") Enclosed was a cordial one-page letter and a sub-essay for *SFC*; a poem titled *Homecoming*, "a specimen which you may or may not find too bad to use." Henceforth, Lovecraft and Conover struck up a touching correspondence that is now considered, in its book form, to be the most intimate account of Lovecraft's personal and professional life.

Finally published 36 years later in 1975, *Lovecraft at Last* throws light on the writer as he was in his mid-forties, hobbled by the loss of his family fortune, periodic physical and mental illness and, most crushingly, his failure to break out in his writing. In answer to Conover's bold and sometimes naive questions, Lovecraft reveals his core beliefs in passing – the secrets of his Cthulhu Mythos and the *Neonomicon*, his literary tastes, and his chronic lack of confidence. In the letters, Lovecraft repeatedly asserts his feelings of inferiority and relegates himself to the ranks of the hacks who published in the pulps (so-called for the cheap paper they were printed on).

"We are the most negligible of small fry, and anyone who mistakes us for real authors is simply wasting his esteem," he writes at one point.

But everything wasn't really as Lovecraft imagined it. Though his writing was only published properly and recognized after his death, an underlying legacy endured throughout his life in the letters he penned to Conover and a host of friends, associates and contemporary writers – Robert Bloch, Fritz Leiber, August Derleth and Clark Ashton Smith, to name a few.

"Five to ten epistles is perhaps the daily

average hereabouts," Lovecraft complained to Conover. "The trouble is that so many of them require research, work, or extended argumentative replies."

H.P.L. was not kidding about the diligence of his replies, all of which were executed in the most thorough manner, often including biographical sketches, poems, stories and loans from his personal library.

Conover, of course, was overjoyed with the regular flood of wisdom that flowed from Lovecraft's pen. Among the items he received from the venerable author (all pictured in *L.O.L.*), were a strip of Lovecraft's signatures (for individual sale in the *SFC*), copies of *Weird Tales*, a chronological bibliography of Lovecraft's publications and a summary of the first half of the author's treatise *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. Conover marvels continuously in his narrative at the graciousness of his first adult friend.

Sadly, the friendship ended abruptly approximately nine months after it had begun when a final letter arrived from Lovecraft's aunt regretfully announcing his death in 1937 at the age of 46. With it, Conover's interest in weird fiction also died (two issues into the *SFC*), only to be reignited over 30 years later when his wife happened upon a curious box marked H.P.L.

A mere 3000 copies of *Lovecraft at Last* were published in 1975, making the book extremely rare. Just this year, Cooper Square Press has reintroduced the title with the addition of an introduction from Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi, giving those who missed out on the first print run a second chance to discover Lovecraft at Last.



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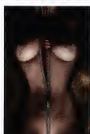
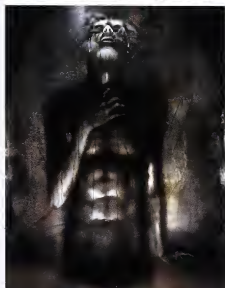
DIGITAL ARTIST DAVID HO RENDERS DESIRE, ISOLATION AND TORMENT INTO PORTRAITS OF THE DAMNED.

by Gary Pullin



David Ho's work really struck a chord with us when his book, *Shadow Maker*, landed in our offices earlier this year. Perhaps it was his magically dark portraits of the body, mind and soul — portraits, he says, that make "the metaphysical physical." Or maybe it's that Ho's twisted vision shares affinity with someone named Giger without simply reproducing what's been done before.

But I'm betting it was his digital recreations of Dante Alighieri's visceral poem *Inferno* that really hit home. Titled *Postcards From Hell*, Ho reproduces Dante's blackest visions with a painstaking knack for pain. "Before starting, many doubts crossed my mind," Ho



notes in the introduction to his book. "Were my illustration skills strong enough to take another man's vision and make them my own?"
You decide.

Shadow Maker, available at www.davidho.com, showcases a collection of work from the past fifteen years. A place where Ho's inner demons are unleashed into digital dimensions. Abandon hope, all ye who enter here ... ☠

opposite: centaur and soul, this page clockwise from top left: the repetition (d), cerberus, body bag, leviathan, figure of fraud, demons and soul n, and river of tears.

A Frankenkid back to his earliest days, Glut tackles the monster first and foremost as a fan, mining old issues of *Famous Monsters*, *Monsters of the Movies* and *Castle of Frankenstein* for articles, some of which he penned himself. His first essay, titled "Frankenstein: The (Un)old True Story" is an attempt to map out the entire movie canon of Frankenstein films and explain away their incongruities (like, for example, why the monster had such a different look in all three *Frankenstein* Hammer films). I suspect that many of you never even noticed, but to those who did, you may find a kinship here—it's a good indication of what follows.

Consequently, Glut's *Frankenstein Archives* is best described as a nostalgic look at the Frankenstein monster in pop art, from films to comics to cartoons; he goes head-to-head with superheroes like Santo and Ultraman, and even meets with The Beatles. Beyond that, Glut shows off his penchant for trivia with essays on uncredited stuntmen who doubled as the monster, an interview with Glem Strange, who played the monster on several occasions, a look at Peter Cushing's appearances in Frankenstein films, common misconceptions and more.

If you're considering buying this book, do it because Glut actually knows of what he speaks. Or do it because you have, like him, fallen in love with a monster.

Rod Gudino

coraline

Neil Gaiman

Harper Collins Press

The line between Grimm Fairy Tale and Grim Slasher Flick is a direct one. Indeed the modern horror film owes quite a bit to those old folk tales that warned you to stay on the path through the dark forest, lest you get eaten by a wolf or chopped to bits by a guy in a gothic mask. In his extraordinary body of work, author Neil Gaiman has perhaps most successfully exploited fairy tale as horror concept. From secret societies that exist alongside our own

(*Neverwhere*) to a road trip through mythological America (*American Gods*), Gaiman has become the master of eccentric chills and has developed a unique voice all his own.

Coraline, his latest, can be classified as either a fairy tale for adults, or a children's book for ages eight to eighty. Like Clive Barker's masterful *The Thief of Always*, Gaiman treads a fine line between whimsy and horror, laughter and chills. Reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*, *Coraline* possesses an undercurrent of violence that just bubbles under the surface and makes for gripping reading.

Coraline Jones, the titular young protagonist, is charged with solving the disappearance of her parents, and finds the answer lies in the literal mirror image of her new home. To save them, she must outwit the chilling "Other Mother", a double of her own, only with pale skin and black buttons in place of eyes.

Why is it that some of the best dark fantasy literature is targeted at children? Full of sinister atmosphere, and complemented by Dave McKean's chilling illustrations, *Coraline* is a slight read at only 160 pages, but packed with twice the imagination of most books three times as long. While definitely not for the young tykes (and uptight adults), *Coraline* is a fine addition to bookshelves for all ages.

Brad Abraham

sorcerers of the nightwing

Geoffrey Huntington
ReaganBooks

Geoffrey Huntington's *Sorcerers of the Nightwing* is, quite simply, dazzling. Furthermore, it is a *rara avis* in the young-adult literary marketplace—a finely-crafted high-gothic novel that neither talks down to its

teenage readers, nor alienates a sophisticated adult readership that can enjoy it on its own merits without any concession to literary quality.

The novel tells the story of young Devon March, an orphaned teenage boy with powers he cannot understand. Following the death of his father, he is sent to live at a remote mansion called Ravenschiff on the coast of Rhode Island. His new guardian, Amanda Muir Crandall, is the mansion's forbidding mistress, the matron-

arch of an old, aristocratic family who have dominated the town of Misery Point for generations. Amanda's teenage daughter, Cecily, is the bright spot in young Devon's life, and between them they set about unraveling the mysteries of Ravenschiff, and the source of Devon's own frightening powers.

The novel owes a great deal to the classic gothic tradition, embodied most recently by the *Dark Shadows* television series, and will resonate with lovers of that horror subgenre. At the same time, Huntington takes the premise in completely contemporary directions. The novel is written in the third-person present, a sophisticated literary device not usually seen in YA fiction, and one that elevates the novel to heights that similar books for teenagers won't ever see.

Lastly, Huntington is a brilliant horror writer—this novel is deeply cinematic, and scary as hell. Forget *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, move over, *Harry Potter*—this is a book you might intend to buy for your younger siblings, but don't be shocked when they steal it back from them. Get an alibi ready.

Michael Rowe



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TERROR HAS BIG EYES

鬼眼 *Recently Received Anime* BY RONALD SIMMONS

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Yes, dear reader, this is yet another *X* review. But fear not, because CLAMP's uber-stylish end-of-the-world saga is finally getting the expanded treatment it so completely deserves.

For those unfamiliar with this column, *X* is the story of the Dragons of Heaven and the Dragons of Earth, two competing magical factions slug-ging it out in modern Tokyo, each seeking the power of God's Will. Superpower teenager Kamui has the ability to tip the scales on the bat-tle, but he won't take sides. Kamui only wants to recover his Divine Sword and be left alone, but this is anime, and destiny isn't something you can easily sidestep.

X the Movie, which received a limited theatri-cal release two years back (and a DVD release a little later), featured glori-ous CLAMP animation, but

the need to cram the entire complicated story and 20-plus characters into 100 minutes robbed it of most of its dramatic power (but not its kick-ass fight scenes). It's now been remade into a 24-part TV series and, judging from these first episodes, you won't want to miss it.

Right from the start, the show hooks you in with Kakyo, a bedridden prisoner who sees the future and is powerless to alter it, not even to prevent the murder of his only friend at the hands of the Dragons of Earth. His visions—glimpses of meetings and battles to come—serve to introduce many of the major characters. And Kakyo's utter resignation at the sight of the apocalypse, the only future left once Kamui returns to Tokyo, sets the tone for the series. The creators also cleverly play the audience by shuf-fling in visions that contradict the events of the movie—a continual reminder that this isn't an old story warmed over.

In addition Kamui, who was previously a com-plete whiner, undergoes a personality transplant and winds up with a chip on his shoulder the size of Gibraltar. When he's not threatening to kill everyone who crosses his path, he's driving away Fuma and Kotori, his only childhood friends, and beating the crap out of their father

(albeit for good reasons—it's that damn destiny thing again).

CLAMP also hasn't let us down with the anima-tion and music, both of which are up to the stan-dards of the movie. In other words, among the best you'll get.

That said, *X* (One) isn't quite as bloody as the movie, but the fight scenes feature the same fluid choreography and astonishing attention to detail. The dubbed voices are also strong. Unfortunately, the DVD doesn't offer any substantial special fea-tures, but the merits are quick and clear to use, something which so many other releases manage to screw up. *X* the Movie was fun, but mostly empty calories. Think of *X* (One) as the full-course dinner. Definitely worth watching and re-watching.

VIDEO RELEASE — **UNUSUALLY TOP SECRET**
MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
90 MINUTES. ENGLISH DVD

Here's 90 minutes of your life you'll never get back, should you be unlucky enough to find your-self watching this flick. *Red Hawk* wants to be a fighting ninja action movie, but only manages to be a movie, period.

Opening sequence: a typical feudal countryside is under the grip of a gang of assassins known as

the Five Dragons. One of their number, Danyong, leaves after witnessing the destruction of a village at the hands of his comrades. His brother is then turned into the ultimate weapon and charged with killing Danyong. Two years later, Danyong has become the masked wandering good guy Red Hawk (so called because his companion is a... well you can guess). He joins forces with a girl determined to uncover the murders of her father, which leads to a plot to overthrow the emperor, and a final showdown with his brother.

Cool huh? Unfortunately, *Red Hawk* commits the ultimate sin. It's boring. You can spot every plot point a mile away; the fights are bland; the characters are one note stereotypes that could have had signs around their necks (Cool Guy, Grieving Daughter, Comic Relief). And the anima-tion looks like it was put together in the '70s. I'm guessing there's only an English version because the Koreans who made it couldn't sell it to the Japanese. Completely forgettable. **F**



X
CLAMP

LEONARD REVELATION
MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
60 MINUTES. DUAL LANGUAGE DVD

Someone should really package together all the Tokyo-Whatever end-of-the-world anime into a massive box set. How many titles are there like this anyway? That said, *Revelation* is one of the better ones, pulling off some good twists and turns, only to trip over itself at the end.

Misadjusted punk Akito's trying to open a doorway to allow Satan into the world (or "President Osa" as he's bizarrely called). He can't seem to summon enough spiritual power to do so though, and worse, he's having labour-relation problems with his demon henchmen until he finally alights on the right girl to sacrifice. But before you can say "reincarnation", his classmate Kojiro starts having post-life dreams where he's handed sacred knives by teddy bear-wielding girls and teams up with some ninja babes to take Akito on. Time to save the world, anyone?

Tokyo Revelation has good ideas (a standout battle between Kojiro and the three-headed Cerebus which doesn't end as expected), some bad ideas (the apocalypse is triggered by a "Demonic Software Program"), a surprising amount of gore considering the low body count, one very icky parasite scene and some sex thrown in for good measure. If it wasn't for a talk-ing-heads ending that gives new meaning to the phrase "anti-climax" and the whole comput-er-and-demons thing that never makes any sense, I'd be giving *Tokyo Revelation* a serious thumbs up. As it is, it gets a not very serious thumbs up.





BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

15¢

THIS ISSUE!

KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER

By Rice and Purcell MOONSTONE

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE HC

By Robinson and Smith IMAGE

CREATURE TECH TPB

By Doug TenNapel TOP SHELF

21 DOWN #1

By Palmiotti, Gray and Sizic DC/ARLSTORM

HELLBOY: THE THIRD WISH #1

By Mike Mignola DARK HORSE

Y: THE LAST MAN #2

By Vaughan and Guerra DC/VERTIGO



Of course, Dan Curtis fans are legion. Given the official albeit long-deceased comic book that *Dark Shadows* yielded, that it never occurred to anyone to do the same for *Kolchak* could arguably be the greatest mystery that the pesky paranormal press agent never got a chance to solve. No longer, the fine folks at Moonstone (until now, best known as purveyors of decent-enough comics based on White Wolf role-playing games such as *Wu-pire: The Masquerade*) have resurrected the hard-boiled hoodoo newshound, launching with an adaptation of *The Night Stalker* so official that it was actually penned by Jeff Rice, the ex-journalist who wrote the original novel.

Kudos to the Moonstone team for bravely condensing a two-hour TV movie story into

a sixty-page comic (though proceeding to add new material with Carl Kolchak and his stripper friend was a choice of dubious value at best). While the end product is a little too fast-paced for its own good, Rice and artist Gordon Purcell loiter wisely when it comes to the always-entertaining Kolchak, whose bunter and fashion sense remain true to the character (affably pushy, and always unkempt). The big disappointment here: a thoroughly misleading cover, which portrays Kolchak in a graveyard predicament suggesting an all-new story that's never unearthed. The good news: maybe that story's en route, as Moonstone has announced that this is only the first issue in a continuing series that will include writing by post-TV Kolchak novelist Mark Dawidziak and Edgar Award-winning crime novelist Stuart M. Kaminsky. See moonstone.com for updates.

For a tenuous but absolutely top quality *Kolchak* connection, in his introduction to the newly collected first volume of the *Leave it to Chance* series, writer James Robinson states that his plucky heroine was fashioned to be a combination of Nancy Drew and, yes, Kolchak. But that's just a small excuse among many great ones for picking up this superb, timeless, good-for-children-of-all-ages adventure.

Best-known for *Starman*, Robinson's writing here is just as strong. He has that rare ability to render hearty characters with very

little dialogue (Chance exclaims, in a moment of crisis, "Lugosi's bones!"), and the quirky plot involves mobsters, goblins, dragons, magicians and, naturellement, a Godzillesque "Toad God." The compelling art by Paul Smith backs another Robinson specialty: unique settings (in this case, Echo City). Plus, *Chance's* dragon, St. George, is an homage to Smith's own previous creation, *Excalibur's* Lockhead. But the

really big reason to buy this book is its oversized format; Image has done some fantastic work with the collected edition medium (see *RMN25* for reviews of *The Red Star* and *Sam & Twitch*), and this deluxe hardcover edition is a pleasure to just hold. (Plus, at \$14.95 US, it's the best-priced must-have out there, bar none.)

Retraction!! \$14.95 US will

land you the equally excellent *Creature Tech* by writer/artist Doug TenNapel (so get them

both). And if *Chance* is Nancy Drew meets Kolchak, this one's best described as Flash Gordon meets Andy Griffith — with dashes of Fox Mulder and Inspector Gadget. An astounding accomplishment given that it's an original, 200-page graphic novel and not a collected edition, *Creature Tech* involves a small town government research institute specializing in alien and mystical artifacts (the title is what the denizens call the place); go figure, it becomes



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the focal point of a truly bizarre confluence of events. Part horror, part science fiction, part romance and all comedy, *Creature Tech* is notable for a variety of reasons, just a few of which are a reluctant hero who puts the square back in square-jawed, a deliciously candid villain with a 100 percent original plan for destroying the world, and a do-good Larry/Darryl/Darryl trio comprised of two rednecks and a giant praying mantis named Ed. TenNapel is the Eisner Award-winning creator of *Earthworm Jim*, and this is easily his finest work to date. If all that doesn't convince you, then take note of this:

barely out the gates (it was only released in August 2002), *Creature Tech* has already been optioned by Fox/Regency.

Given the Gen13 universe's tendency for manga-style shenanigans, the marginally-related *21 Down* is a refreshing surprise that has more in common with "reality" superhero comics like *Powers*, *Deadline* and *Astro*

City. Tormented protagonist Preston Kalls was saddled with a misnomer, albeit a cool one: Kalls has the "super power" to psychically see a dead person's final moments, effected by direct physical contact with the corpses (shades of *The Dead Zone* in reverse). But using the power also happens to be killing him. This is as much a horror story as it is one of conspiracy and espionage (men in black analogs abound, and a babbleicious Bond-type agent brings the debut issue to a killer close). Ignore the noisily cover: there's a lot more to *21 Down* than meets the eye.

Mike Mignola's latest *Hellboy* miniseries (really mini – two issues!) is an excellent reminder of why the most consistent charac-



Hellboy: Witty dialogue, colourful characterization, no-nonsense action.

ters are creator-owned. Featuring ingenious references to both the legend of the Erinyes and the famous story of "The Monkey's Paw," the front half of *The Third Wish* finds our hero summoned to Africa for reasons unknown by a witch doctor named Mohloeni, who barely has time to give the demon-cum-investigator a talisman before the sea swallows Hellboy whole. Witty dialogue and colourful characterization (including the ever-effervescent Hellboy quipping, "I'll be damned") balanced with no-nonsense action (a wordless, six-page, underwater fist fight) and a shocking cliff-hanger ending point to only one outcome: I didn't think it was possible, but I'm looking more forward to the conclusion of this story than I am the Del Toro/Perlman *Hellboy* movie.

One of the more intriguing concepts launched this year comes, not surprisingly, from DC's Vertigo imprint. *Y: The Last Man* posits an alternate now where, without warning, every man on earth suddenly drops dead

— except, of course, one. Enough threads were laid in the debut issue to suggest that science gone awry will be the culprit and that a ring with magic powers will be what's giving the man his lasting powers, but writer Brian K. Vaughan (*Batman*, *The Hood*) is renowned for red herrings. To wit: Y's titular hero is called Yorick, which could indicate foreshadowing of Hamlet-ish indecisiveness but could also just be a name whose initial reflects the male chromosome. (Plus, if you're looking for overt symbolism, Yorick's an amateur escape artist.) Spectacular painted covers by J. G. Jones (strangely reminiscent of Brian Bolland's *Animal Man*) and the logo/title treatment of the year put this one right over the edge. **A-**





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AUDIO DROME

REVIEWS BY GREG CHANT, TOM DRAGOMIR, ROD GUDINO, AND AARON LUPTON



BLADE II

Marco Beltrami

Varèse Saravalle

A lot of people really dug *Blade II*, but I was too busy being captivated by Guillermo Del Toro's spooky sweet ghost fable *The Devil's Backbone* to really notice. Nevertheless, I am a fan of composer Marco (Scream) Beltrami and was looking forward to hearing what he had in store for the movie. His score is dark, violent and percussive, occasionally breaking free (as on Main Title) to throw in a bucket of cool, or to reference the *Myssa* subplot in softer, more sombre moments (*Myssa Sucks*, *Myssa Over Easy*). The main of it, however, is hell-bent on the action sequences, many of which prove too much to listen to on their own. Some really nice touches elsewhere though.

GC 3.5



CHRIS ALEXANDER:

ANNIHILATOR

Planet of the Vampires

Melrose Records

Chris Alexander: honor rut, Bava-philic, *RM* contributor and, yes, Annihilator, brings you this independent outing that tries to right only one of so many wrongs when it comes to the movies of Mario Bava (in this case,

giving his *Terrone nello spazio* a prop-or-synth soundtrack). Cue in *Planet of the Vampires* as the credits roll and immerse yourself in an entirely different – read: more shockingly profound – experience of the Maestro's chilling science-fiction horror film (the very one that left its afterimage on Ridley Scott's *Alien*). Brooding, sinister, Bava; you can only do right by this CD. Available from harrange/1307

asf.com. GC 3.5



THE HANGMEN

No Happy Endings

Reffer Records

We gave you the heads up on these blood lovin' Brits a couple of issues

back (*RM#28*) and here they are again, with a collection of Halloween tunes done up punkabilly style, great for those late October barn parties. "On this cold grey night let this story begin," croons vocalist guitarist Loz Diabolo on *The Evil's Calling*, which sets the stage nicely for *The Hangmen's* capricious brand of psychobilly terror. Looking at the liner notes is a little like taking a walk through the monster museum: Count Orlock, the Phantom and the Hypnotist leer out of the grainy black and whites – a perfect backdrop to tunes like *I Was A Teenage Suicide*, *Spring Heeled Jack* and *You Are Dying* (which features excerpts from *Dawn of the Dead*), among a host of others. This is no shit. *The Hangmen* kick ass consistently on this album – from their sinister cover of the Stones' *Play With Fire*, to bustout tracks like *The Pain Game*. Rock 'n' roll macabre of this

calibre simply can't be overlooked.

GC 3.5



MISFITS/BALZAC

Day the Earth Caught Fire

Misfits/BMP/Parade Records

Fans and Fiends can rejoice that the Misfits have officially launched their own label, which premieres with this split-single CD featuring the Fifts' 25th anniversary lineup (Jerry Only, Dez Cadena and Marky Ramone) along with Balzac, Japan's notorious horror punk rockers. The twist here is that the bands are covering each other's tunes: the Misfits do a song called

AUDIO TALES OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL

THE GRIST MILL Vol. 1

Scott Hickey and Hollis Higgins

STH Productions

You don't have to tell me on the concept of audio tales of terror; I practically grew up listening to the stuff (and I really wish there was more of a market for it, 'cause when it's done properly it can be really scary). Anyway, we ran into the folks who did *Grist Mill* at a Chiller show a couple of months back, and they handed us this, the first volume in what could be a new franchise. Vol. 1 presents three twenty-four minute full-cast audio dramas titled *Bluebeard's Door*, *The Estates* and *The Homecoming*. They're all creatively put together with some good incidental music courtesy of Hollis Higgins that sets a mood and makes for easy transitions between scenes. But audio rests on the strength of the stories and the actors who bring them to life and, even though the former on *The Grist Mill* offer contemporary twists on classic ideas, the actors involved have a tendency to say their lines as if they're reading them from a script. While I have to say that the producers of *The Grist Mill* could learn a thing or two from the British, still, this remains a worthy entry into audio horror and certainly worth a listen.

GC 3.5



THE GRIST MILL Vol. 2

Scott Hickey and Hollis Higgins

STH Productions

An appointment book gives a woman the ability to control the future, a grave digger unearths an age-old secret shared only by those who bury the dead, and a mysterious creature-filled darkness descends on a town... these are the stories that await you on Vol. 2 of *The Grist Mill*. As with the first volume, the stories are lampshaded by some wooden delivery on behalf of the actors, and the occasionally less than excellent script. But despite it all, *Grist Mill* Vol. 2 still works for into right listening; like many horror stories that happen in the mind, the listener is called on to fill out the dark spots. Depending on how imaginative you are, you may find something here that truly scares you. GC 3.5



Day The Earth Caught Fire (very influenced by themselves), while Balzac takes on a Haunting/Don't Open Till Doomsday medley. The CD single is strictly for the collectors, but if you're reading this, that probably means you. **GC 3.5/5**



THE DEADCATS

Bad Pussy

Flying Saucer Records

These self-described "punkability maniacs" are less punk and more old-school psychotic rock and roll.

Their influences? Elvis, Eddie Cochran, Sid Vicious and a host of other dead cats. Apparently, the band's been around for some eighteen years, haunting the Vancouver bar circuit (where they live) and select parts of Europe and the East. The disc's title might give you the wrong impression: The Deadcats are actually a class act all the way, and frequently try their shades to vintage '50s and early '60s rock, surf and punk. Hey, somebody's gotta be doing it, and why not in the guise of the Dead? Highlights include Psychocat, Crypt Zombie Hula, CSS Mole and a cover of Johnny Cash's Mean Eyed Cat. Available from flying-saucer.com/direct.ca. **GC 3.5/5**



ANTIWORLD

The Horror of It All

Avonier State of Mind

(www.deathrock.com/antiworld/)

Portland, Oregon's Antiworld are self-proclaimed death rock, playing old-school punk rock with various themes, mostly horror in the movies. Dressed head to toe in white and black corpse paint and funeral attire, these four ghoul rockers play bare bones, simple progression odes to the Brain That Wouldn't Die, Hill House, and a variety of zombie and supernatural scenarios. Not bad for no-budget punk rock, but it couldn't help thinking the female lead vocals sound off-kilter with the rest of the band. Case in point: on Tail Man, Antiworld starts off with a cool-as-hell guitar-driven cover of Fred Myrow's Phantom theme, only to quickly degenerate into another forgettable track once the rest of the song kicks in. A version of Chopin's Funeral March is also good for a listen or two. Antiworld has contributed to various compilations including a tribute to Rozz Williams. **AL 3.5/5**



DOOMTREE

Doomtree

www.doomtree.com

Doomtree is the brand spanking new band by dark rock icon Steve Zing, who handles lead vocal

duties for perhaps the first time. For those of you not in the know, Zing founded the skins on three albums for the influential goth/metal/punk outfit Samhain, the group Glenn Danzig formed after the unfolding of the Misfits back in '83. Last year he teamed up with fellow ex-Samhain member London May, AFI vocalist Darvey Hovok and Danzig guitarist Todd Youth for the cult deathrock hit Son of Sam. After a few listens to Doomtree, it would seem that Zing has carried influences from both of his former outfits to this latest exercise in dark, powerful punk rock. Relying on crunchy rock guitar, some keyboards, and haunting vocal passages, Doomtree ekes out music in the spirit of '80s goth and punk, all the while managing to make it sound original. Chalk it up to another great album by the ever-expanding Misfits/Samhain/Danzig family of bands. If that isn't enough, Zing recently informed Rue Morgue of an upcoming project that will feature himself alongside Son of Sam/Danzig member Todd Youth. Keep one eye peeled! **AL 3.5/5**



THE CRUXSHADOWS

Wishfire

Dancing Ferret Discs

The makers of the most downloaded song on MP3.com's goth chart (1988's Leave Me Alone), The Cruxshadows can be said to live a little closer to the nite club than the graveyard. Their particular style of Darkwave harvests elements of industrial, synth-pop and goth from the scraps of Faith And The Muse, Icon Of Coil, This Ascension and

ATTACK OF THE HALLOWEEN HOOLIGANS!

MONSTER TRUX

The Search For...

Ukase (monstertrux@aol.com)
Rising out of Chicago in 1999, the punk rock hooligans known as Monster Trux exist to promote two

very cool things: monster movies and old-school skateboarding. The band is a throwback to the early '80s skate rock bands like Suicidal

Tendencies, Agent Orange and the Faction, but they have enough soft melodies to separate them from the pack. Yes their fascinations rest primarily with skateboarding imprints like Powell Peralta, and classic boards like Psycho Silk, but the band dresses up in blood-splattered monster costumes on stage, and have recorded a few B-movie-themed songs like Sigmund The Sea Monster, Famous Monsters, and Creature Feature, bringing a fun and cheesy gimmick to

the fray. This 7-inch is very DIY, limited to 500 copies, and comes on blood-red vinyl. Anyone with fond memories of Steve Caballero, Slimeball Wheels and old movie monster mags would do well to give Monster Trux a shot. **AL 3.5/5**

MONSTER TRUX

Grind

CARQUE

There's something endearing about a band that can throw it all to the wind in the name of skateboarding and monster movies, but that's rock'n'roll I guess, or more accurately, punk rock. The first full-length release from Monster Trux, Grind flies off the handle with a lot of energy and the requisite love put in all the right places. Homages to the cause include Svengoolie, Bones Brigade and Monster Show. **GC 3.5/5**

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NIGHT OF THE LOVING DEAD



NEKROMANTIKX PUT THE PSYCHO IN PSYCHOBILLY

by Gregorius Chant

If you've never been privy to tunes like Generation 666, Who Killed The Cheerleader or Gargoyles Over Copenhagen, brother, you're missing out on the horror psychobilly revolution that's got the Devil himself trying to cool his heels! The weird and sacred rite of a host of American, Canadian and European undead hipsters, this creepy cool scene just burst the coffin doors wide open with the North American arrival of The Nekromantikx' *Return of the Loving Dead* (see *RM#29*). The Denmark trio's debut (actually their sixth album overseas) is a boneyard dance of hard stompin' hard horror – topics include cannibalism (Murder For Breakfast), zombies (Nice Day For A Resurrection), nekkid undead girls (Haunted Cathouse), and your favourite book (Nekromantikx).

Giving flesh to the spooky spectacle are three guys who seem to have sprung from an unholy union between Elvis Presley and the Wolfman: brothers Peter (guitar) and Kristian (drums) Sandorff, and lead ghoul, Kim Nekroman, who sports an eye-popping stand-up bass in the shape of a coffin.

"I designed and built it myself," beams the proud Nekroman. "The idea came to me after our first show back in 1989. After the show, I

watched it on video and thought to myself, 'hey, I need something different.' I got hold of a real child's coffin and put an old upright neck on it. Since then I've built five coffin basses. To my knowledge, there are a couple of other bands out there also playing with homemade coffin basses, but none as beautiful as mine, ha ha!"

And if you think that's just a clever schtick, think again: the man has a knack for battering that thing till it's a purring like a machine gun in his hands – an effect that'll get your skeleton rattling in your stomping boots every time. Their music – a particularly furious hybrid of horror rockabilly and speed punk – has been tagged "necrobilly" and "Nordic psychopunkadeathbilly" by fans, but Nekroman prefers the more widely used "psychobilly" moniker popularized by The Reverend Horton Heat and others – although, for him, the word's got a darker connotation.

"To me the two things always been together," he says. "I guess the word 'Psycho' – taken from Alfred Hitchcock – explains itself!"

Already the album has garnered considerable attention and rave reviews from North American mainstream press, making the Nekromantikx a likely contender to bring horror psychobilly out

from the underground. Nekroman seems to be particularly suited for the task; not only is he also involved in a side project with his wife (called HorrorPops) as well as a second band with the brothers Sandorff (called Swartwald Library), but he's also currently working on a self-described "psychobilly Bible."

"It's all about psychobilly since the very beginning in the late 1970s up till now," he explains. "It's about how it developed in different parts of the world. There will be a lot of history and pictures of the average psychobilly."

Meanwhile, *Return of the Loving Dead* continues to spread like some airborne disease, largely on a lot of strong word of mouth. Nekroman says that plans are underway to follow it up with another album of hard hitting tunes for the full moon. But will the new songs reference any Danish horror flicks for a change?

"Danish horror movies!" laughs Nekroman. "Well, back in the 1960s they did one called *Repulsion*. Other than that, nothing interesting comes from Denmark!"

Check into the Nekromantikx' online crypt at www.nekromantikx.com... and don't forget yer straightjacket! ☠

Ozzy Past and Present

BLACK SABBATH

Past Lives

SANCTUARY RECORDS

It must be all that Ozzy hoopa on TV that got the push on this belated live album culled from the darkest corner of the vault. *Past Lives* catches the Sabs as they



once were; filled with a savage fury that would get progressively mustier with age. Disc One presents a ten song set from a Manchester show since 1973, while Disc 2 catches them live at various locations throughout the seventies. There's no doubt that Black Sabbath wrote the Bible on dark rock and was really the first to crunch the gothic horror of Hammer and early Mario Bava into heavy metal structures. All the classics are here; Iron Man, Paranoid, War Pigs and Children Of The Grave, along with curio renditions of Black Sab-

bath, Fairies Wear Boots, N.A.B. and a bunch of others. Sanctuary Records also saw fit to include extensive liner notes with rare photos, a collectible poster and a Black Sabbath guitar pic.

GC 3.5/5

OZZY

Various

COLUMBIA

From classic to commercial, *Ozzfest*

presents Ozzy as we're bound to remember him, screaming "Let me see your fucking hands!" to a crowd of 20,000 people. The venerable Ozzy kicks things off with his proslavery-laden rendition of War Pigs (in which the audience sings roughly half the lines) before handing the mic over to System Of A Down, Rob Zombie, Meshuggah and others. Aside from Ozzy and Zombie, however, there's no real horror component here, so that's where we'll have to leave it.

GC 3.5



working with punchy industrial beats, 1980s synthetics with lyrics that don't get overly-angushed. A sexy S&M design, titles like *Flesh Menagerie* and some lusty sampling keep things dark and erotic enough to get past the more danceable end. The club feel breaks off occasionally, indulging in strange digital signposts like 96 Degrees (complete with some familiar *Blair Witch* samples) if you get off on a bit of 'sexy' sleaze and dig the dark electro scene. *Nymphomaniac* packs just enough kink to keep the nastiest of nite clubs grinding it out till sunrise.

TD 3.5/5 1/2



IMPALED

Mondo Medicate

DEATHWORM RECORDS

The gore-grind genre isn't likely to offer any new surprises any time soon, but it's still fun to watch participating bands try to out-gore one another. The latest in the ongoing competition is *Mondo Medicate*, the third album from Impaled, and one which sees the band take their murderous legacy from the graveyard to the operating table. Drawing inspiration from the ban imposed on their last couple of album covers, Impaled offer both censored and uncensored versions of their latest, so that fans might enjoy the fine artistry in the comfort of their own home. Look for standout tracks like *The Hippocratic Oath*, *Operating Theatre*, and *Carpe Mortem* on this hospital horror concept album - a body bag full of musical desecration. However, grind purists should take note; Impaled have actually slowed down their act,

playing somewhere below one million MPH. What more can we say? Visiting hours are over!

AL 3.5/5 1/2



IVAN AND THE NECROLYTES

Flesh Hungry

LOSING YOUR HEAD RECORDS

Not nearly as musically degraded as you may expect from an EP that opens with a song called *Brutally Morbid Pregnant Nun Massacre*. Ward has it that an honest-to-goodness love of the genre and some free studio time led to the release of *Flesh Hungry*, metal-horror hybrid with a knack for swingin' keys and pseudo Misfits sing-alongs featuring two tracks from the upcoming full-length *Some Place Dark* plus a few demos and live cuts. While the Misfits comparison is a no brainer (these guys are from New Jersey, after all), there's a bit of a Type O Negative meets evil Jim Morrison thing going on as well, heard especially when singer Ivan Dingo growls out tunes about zombie lust (*Criswell's Corpses*) and eating spine (*Crimson Veil*). The quality's a little suspect but things spook up enough to warrant you to keep an eye out for their first fully-produced release. Available from www.losingyourhead.com.

TD 3.5/5 1/2



Skippy Puppy, without getting close enough to one particular sound to justify flat-out comparison. On *Wishfire*, the follow-up to last year's *Tears* EP, a mix of crunchy guitar courtesy of Stacey Campbell and moody mono-vox from singer Rogue actually owe a lot to Gary Numan's *Tubeway Army* days. The give and take between cold digital texture and earthy spiritual arrangement works best on tracks like 4th Phase and Earthfall, the darker moments vented by Rachel McDonnell's electric violin. With no obvious flinches to horror, I've gotta drop a skull here, but chances are if you miss the hey-day of '80s dark synthpop, *Wishfire*

will satiate your dark desires for something new, no matter how old.

TD 3.5



INFORMATIK

Nymphomaniac

METROPOLIS RECORDS

One of the better gothic electro-dance discs to break the gates in a while. From Bean-town, Informatik sound kind of like VNV Nation,



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VIDEODROME PRESENTS

BLOOD. GUTS. URINE. GWAR

GWAR

Live From Antarctica DVD Skulhedface DVD

METALBLADE RECORDS

One of the assumptions we carry through life is that if you listen to Gwar, the famous art-school-student cum intergalactic barbarian/rock band, then you probably have not yet graduated the 11th grade, nor do your chances look good for doing so. Regardless, I would be a liar if I didn't admit that I got a kick out of watching several men in impossibly

awkward-looking plastic and foam monster gear, playing hard driving punk-metal music. Not only do they pull off playing their instruments under all that baggage, but they manage to pump more blood into the audience in a single show than Alice Cooper or Kiss did in a full decade.

Senseless gore and violence has always been Gwar's calling card, but as time moves on, the group has managed to sneak in some quasi-leftist politics into their act, focusing their obsessions of blood, death and butchery on those particular personalities whose end Gwar feels would vastly improve society. Just as Alice Cooper decapitated himself at the end of each performance, Gwar

dismembers and decapitates Mike Tyson, George W. Bush and Bin Laden. The Pope himself was fed to a giant dinosaur on the last tour. Lucky for nerds who can appreciate the subtle art of Gwar, Metalblade Records has reissued two visual productions from the vault in DVD format.

Live from Antarctica was Gwar's first live video, originally released in 1990. Their performance is close enough to quality, which is doubly

impressive taking into account that the music clearly comes in second to the visuals. All the characters are here, from manager Sleazy P. Martini to Techno Destructo, and the bloodletting is truly unrelenting. Arms are lopped off, heads are smashed, brains are eaten — if the early '90s spawned political correctness, you'd never know it.

Extras include a backstage segment featuring a very cool interview with the band out of costume. It's certainly interesting to hear vocalist Dave Brock-

ie (a.k.a. Oderus Urungus) discuss the motivation behind the entity known as Gwar. Very brief artwork clips and a discography are included as well.

Next up is the over-the-top gross out fest known as *Skulhedface*, Gwar's second attempt at a short film. Here, the band takes on giant media conglomerates by portraying a



world ruled by one huge media octopus, whose tentacles spread everywhere save a little cable access channel called Slave Pit, owned and operated by you know who. Appropriately enough, Jello Biafra plays Glomco, the corporate giant in question.

Although the movie sets itself up as some kind of social commen-

tary, it quickly degenerates into a collage of blood, guts, semen, rape and midget fetish. The disgust factor is cranked to 11, and considering the film was made in 1994, it would not be at all surprising if Troms admitted to using it as an influence for recent gross outs *Terror Firmer* and *Citizen Toxie*.

The big downside to these re-releases is that they share the same extras. That's right, on both *Live From Antarctica* and *Skulhedface* you'll find the exact same interview, discography and artwork track. Guess they figured no one really needs more than one Gwar DVD for their collection. **AL**

Live: 2.5/2

Skulhedface: 2.5



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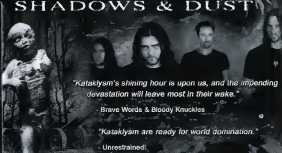
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Play Dead

Game Reviews by Marco DeCola
HIGHEST RATING IS THREE



GRAPHICS



PLAYABILITY



SHIVERS



**It's a
half-brained**

ONIMUSHA 2:
SAMURAI'S DESTINY
PC GAME
CAPCOM



**It's a no
brainer**

ZOMBIES!!!
BOARD GAME
TWILIGHT
CREATIONS INC.



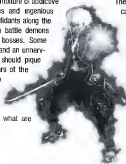
**It's a
brainer**

GOth
TRIVIA/BOARD GAME
MCNUTTY GAMES

Once again, Capcom outdoes itself with the highly anticipated sequel to their award-winning blockbuster *Onimusha Warriors* (one of the top-selling games of all time for the PS2). What's in store? Well, for one, the graphics and gore continue to climb in quality and quantity, which can only be a good thing!

Set in a fantastical feudal Japan replete with authentic historical garb and weapons, players take the role of Yūbei, a young warrior whose village has been destroyed and his people killed by the evil Nobunaga's minions. Revenge is on the menu (no leap there) and it's a dish that's best served red!

The game is a mixture of addictive action sequences and ingenious puzzles with confidants along the way helping you battle demons and monstrous bosses. Some spooky settings and an unnerving soundscape should pique the eyes and ears of the horror fan. The action figures are already available from McFarlane Toys; what are you waiting for?



If you're the kind who digs the thought of a little *Down of the Dead* in your *Monopoly*, then have I got a game for you! It's called *Zombies!!!*, a new board game targeted to creepy kids 8 and up. Overall the game's pretty mindless and mildly entertaining, but the young'uns will like it and the older folk may find the entertainment factor increases with consumption of alcohol.

You're a coloured plastic figurine who has to battle his way through small-town America mapped out in 4" X 4" templates that form an expanding geographic board filled with zombie figurines. First one to fight their way to the help-pad wins the game. Simple as that.

The game is lightly designed with colourful cards and artwork, some of which features some great and grisly images. *Zombies!!!* is definitely for players of old-school games and reminded me of the lost nights of my pre-teen years, long before PCs, PlayStation and the Internet. If you know what I mean, you'll want to give this a chance or, better yet, make a stocking stuffer out of it.

The expansion, *Zombies!!! 2*, is now available and offers expanded rules that take the gameplay to a military installation, a rift off of *Resident Evil* (and a lot more fun than the movie). Also includes new map files, event cards and six glow-in-the-dark zombies!

The *Amityville Horror* house was built on what type of ground? What is the name of Rosemary's baby? How did '50s pop sensation Ricky Nelson die? What historical US city does Anne Rice reside in? How old was Lizzie Borden when her parents were murdered in 1892? Move over *Trivial Pursuit*, *Goth* is the game that will truly test the amount of throwaway info you have amassed in that mercurial little mind of yours.

Like *TP*, *Goth* is played with a small board, some pawns and a huge stack of cards (double-sided) that list every question imaginable – and then some – related to the genre that you and I both love. Categories include: Movie Mayhem, Aichey (miscellaneous topics, some of which are only tangentially horror-related), Music Macabre, Bloody Tales and Poetry & Stills. Correct answers give players "tombstones", and thirteen of 'em will give you bragging rights as the horror guru on your block.

The board is nicely drawn up with a graveyard look and there are some cool twists to the game, like the strategically placed "haunted squares" that make it hazardous as you move around the board. But in the end it's the questions that make this thing work, some are tough (What Wes Craven film poster hangs ripped on the basement wall in *The Evil Dead*?), some are easy (What words do you need to repeat three times in order to have Beetle Juice appear?), and some are just lame (What German thrash band has the bass-playing frontman Tom Angelripper?). In the end it's glum fun for everyone.



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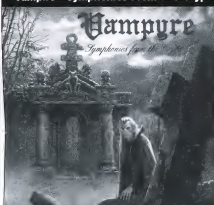
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PRESENTS

WEIRD TALES



1923-1954

In the annals of horror, there are many sacred names, but none are as glossed over as *Weird Tales*, a magazine that everyone's heard about but only a few have actually read. The *Weird Tales* name has slipped into the collective consciousness of the genre; it's a staple in horror history books, smuggled up to names like H.P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury. Its distinctive logo, active since early on, is instantly recognizable, as are its classic covers – bizarre imagery exploding in a shower of bright colours.

For many, *Weird Tales* began and ended with its so-called Golden Age, a period roughly from its bumble beginnings in 1923, and through the Depression and post-Depression years. And though the magazine faced bankruptcy early on (a circumstance that was curtailed in its infancy when publisher Jacob Clark Henneberger decided to sell controlling profits to his printer), it also yielded some very big fruit within months of its arrival.

His name was H.P. Lovecraft, and at the time, he was a struggling young writer looking for a place to sell his fantastically macabre stories. Although Lovecraft was initially rejected by *WT* editor Edwin Baird, Baird's assistant, Farnsworth Wright, convinced him to reconsider and the purchase was made. Over the ensuing years, *Weird Tales* would bring readers Lovecraft stories that are now deemed classics: *Dagon*, *The Hound*, *The Rats In The Walls*, *Imprisoned With The Pharaohs* (which the author ghost wrote for Harry Houdini), and, much later, *The Call of Cthulhu*, which single-handedly revolutionized the genre of weird fiction.

By the end of the first year, Henneberger was offering Lovecraft the job as editor, but the reclusive writer refused to leave his Rhode Island home and the job went to Wright, who went on to discover a cache of new names in horror fiction, among them August Derleth, E. Hoffmann Price, Frank Belknap Long, Clark Ashton Smith and Seabury Quinn, who later became *WT*'s most popular writer.

Wright also inaugurated the magazine's long-running tradition of using lurid cover art, much of it which featured exotic nudes in macabre scenarios. The covers highlighted what readers could find

inside: risqué tales of horror, the supernatural and science fiction adventures, but it took an eye to render them with the winning combination of titillation and taboo. Great artists soared on the covers of *Weird Tales*; among them Hannes Bok and Margaret Brundage, whose exotic nudes often landed the magazine in controversy.

Other writers soon came on board, some from as far away as England (J.F. Benson and H.R. Wakefield), some right at home, like Robert E. Howard, who invented the sword and sorcery genre (and later made popular with Conan the Barbarian). The magazine would also purchase and publish work from Tennessee Williams, Val Lewton, Hugh B. Cave, Manly Wade Wellman and Robert Bloch.

Even so, the decade ended on a foreboding note for *Weird Tales*. In 1936 Robert E. Howard took his own life and, in 1937 Lovecraft passed away. A few years later, Smith stopped writing. The magazine moved head offices from Chicago to New York and, shortly thereafter, Farnsworth Wright was let go.

But *Weird Tales* would prevail under a new editor (Dorothy MacLaurin) and the talents of a fount of young new genre writers, among them Fritz Leiber Jr., Theodore Sturgeon and Ray Bradbury, whose lyrical horror stories would one day turn him into an internationally acclaimed writer.

By the time the magazine folded in 1953, *Weird Tales* had become synonymous with the term "shudder pulp" and stood to heavily influence the next great wave of horror, particularly in the comic books of the fifties (*Tales From the Crypt*, *Weird Mysteries*) and television shows like *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*.

Today, of course, we are more apt to credit contemporary horror to the individuals who contributed to *Weird Tales* rather than the magazine itself. But the truth is that Bradbury's *The October Game*, Bloch's *Yours Truly Jack The Ripper* and Lovecraft's *The Dunwich Horror*, may have never seen the light of day if it wasn't for the existence of this truly "Unique Magazine."

Rod Gudin

Weird Tales was subsequently resurrected and continues to thrive, now in its 78th year. See www.dnapublications.com for further information.



Two classic covers and (above) the very first issue of *Weird Tales* circa March 1923.

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